



2003

LOTE: Sinhala GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Many students acquitted themselves quite creditably in the oral component of the examination. They had put in a lot of thought and careful preparation before they presented themselves in the examination room. There were no signs of undue excitement, stress or nervousness and students appeared to be relaxed and confident.

In most cases general conversation centred on their family and friends. Students spoke positively about future aspirations and were able to handle questions from the assessors without hesitation and expand on points that needed clarification. They maintained an effective conversation often picking up cues and contributing further ideas with confidence. They lost little doubt of their ability to speak Sinhala fluently and effectively.

In the discussion component of the oral examination, sub-topic for Detailed Study, it was quite clear that students had done a great deal of research and were well-armed with relevant information to support their opinions and arguments. They were so well-prepared with their chosen topic, that many students found it smooth sailing when interacting with assessors.

All students brought support materials such as photographs, pictures, diagrams and maps. They were relevant to their topics and purposefully selected. The map of the irrigation system of Sigiriya was a rare find and was useful in explaining some of the intricate hydraulic theories of the past in simple language.

Sub-topics that found favour with the students this year were special ceremonies and festivals, national heroes, women in the workforce, sweat shops and child labour. Students were well prepared and well informed on the chosen topic and their Sinhala was literate and grammatically correct in the discussions.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Many students had little difficulty maintaining and advancing the conversation and discussion with the assessors. The one or two students who stumbled did so due to insufficient preparation rather than an inability to carry the conversation forward.

Most students supported their assertions, ideas and opinions with solid evidence and information. A number produced relevant examples to explore and expand on the chosen topics.

The more able students displayed a high degree of accuracy in expression in literate and sophisticated Sinhala. Their sentence structure was simple, but highly effective. Slips if any were negligible.

A number of students who had chosen sub-topics such as National heroes, Kings and Events dealt with the subject with commendable vocabulary and grammar to explain accurately, Sigiriya and its frescoes, architecture and irrigation systems.

Only a small number of students failed to maintain the tempo, pronunciation, intonation and nuances in expressions. Many students came from Sinhalese-speaking backgrounds and so pronunciation, stress and intonation in spoken expression were quite normal.

None of the students had problems engaging assessors in conversation and in discussion. Practically every student had come prepared to deal with the chosen topic with relevant information and ideas and was able to move the conversation forward despite the occasionally difficult questions from the assessors, which were well fielded.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most students responded to the questions accurately and appropriately and some gave excellent responses to the questions and were awarded high marks. Very few students showed a low level of performance. The question paper was fair and students with a thorough understanding of Sinhala as well as for those with lesser understanding performed

well. They had the opportunity to gain more marks from the text provided in Section 2 – Reading and Responding – which had questions that assessed their comparing, contrasting and evaluating capabilities. It was evident that some students did not perform well in answering these questions due to their limited vocabulary and the lack of knowledge in translating into English. This weakness can be overcome by concentrating more on doing similar exercises in the classroom. Teachers should pay more attention to providing key words, glossary and translations on various topics according to the study design.

In Section 3 – Writing in Sinhala, comprised four tasks under different kinds of writing having different purposes, audiences and contexts. These tasks provided students with a great opportunity of having a broad selection for producing good pieces of writing. Question 9 was the most popular task because students could use their own experiences to describe the Australian school experience.

The possibility of prior preparation in detail through guesswork was limited in this examination. In previous years the students had to respond by writing an informal letter in Section 2 – Part B but this year the task was different. Students were expected to write a formal letter giving the necessary information for a job vacancy that appeared in a newspaper advertisement and this proved a real challenge.

All students answered the questions according to instructions given. As expected, they used the correct sections of the answer books for their responses. Only a few students made mistakes in creative writing (Section 2 – Writing in Sinhala) by doing rough draft work in the same area without jotting down the facts in brief prior to the final piece of writing.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A

There were three texts. Performance was judged by the student's capacity to understand general and specific aspects of text by identifying and analysing information and accurately conveying the information.

Text 1

Text 1 was based on a Radio news item on a project to build a bridge connecting Mannar in Sri Lanka and Rameshwaram in India.

a

Most students identified the two towns and named them correctly. A few were unable to name the second town correctly and only got 1 mark out of 2 (possibly they were not familiar with the Indian name).

b

The responses for this question were very good. Many students provided the correct answer as 'The main objective of the project is the development of trade between the two countries'. A few named it incorrectly as 'Tourism'.

c

Although there were many correct answers such as 'Tourism would benefit from the building of the bridge', a few incorrect answers were also found, such as 'Trade'.

d

Most students identified the correct answer as Foreign investments in Sinhala (they had noted it down in the space) but translated it into English incorrectly.

Text 2

a–d

Text 2 was based on a community announcement. There were four questions. The first three were about the place, purpose and items. Most students answered them correctly. Compared to the other questions, Question d seemed to be harder for many students (possibly they were not familiar with the word 'attribute').

Text 3

Text 3 was based on a dialogue between a woman and a man who were preparing to go to Sri Lanka for a holiday. The first two questions were multiple-choice.

a

This was answered extremely well.

b

There were a few incorrect answers, for example instead of answering 'no income from coconut' students answered 'no place to stay in Sri Lanka'.

c

Responses were appropriate.

d

Most students were confused with this question – 'Which expressions indicate that Siri does not agree with Sama?' Instead of using the expressions such as 'values', 'waste of money' 'ah' 'oh' they tried to explain Siri's actual words.

e

There were good responses explaining the planned activities from the conversation of Siri and Sama when in Sri Lanka.

Part B

Text 4

a

Text 4 was based on a speech given by the School Principal about work experience. Although the text was simple the students were expected to have the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of the text by identifying and analysing information. In the text the Principal emphasises two important learning experiences. 'Be on time' and 'Keep daily records', but some students could not name both correctly.

b

Students were asked to explain the significance of the expression 'Do so with honour' but this seemed to be a hard question. However, reasonable answers provided by students were considered as correct.

Text 5

Text 5 was based on a discussion on 'Dengue epidemic in Sri Lanka'.

a

This was a multiple-choice type question and it was answered correctly by many students.

b-c

Responses to Questions b and c were reasonably good.

d

Students' responses were mostly incorrect. Some students mentioned 'Royal College had been closed down temporarily' as evidence that Dengue fever had become a serious problem in Sri Lanka, ignoring the more important fact that the annual number of Dengue patients had increased since 1965 from 40 to 5000 to date.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

In this section students were expected to show their understanding of the general and specific details of the texts, by comparing, contrasting, summarising, evaluating and conveying the information accurately and appropriately.

Part A

Text 6

Text 6 was an extract from a newspaper article about 'How the findings from a recent archaeological excavation changed the perception of history in Sri Lanka'.

a

There was a table to be filled in by students and it was well done.

b

Students needed to evaluate the level of civilisation in Anuradhapura according to the findings. Most evaluated the facts successfully but there was evidence that some struggled to do so effectively.

c

This was a most difficult question where students had to understand the specific aspects of the text by comparing, summarising and conveying the information. Some were not very confident and some answers were not up to the standard due to unfamiliarity of the English equivalent that had to be used in the translation.

Text 7

Text 7 was about the 'Asian Brown Cloud'.

a

Students were asked to comment on the research undertaken by INDOEX with regard to the Brown Cloud phenomenon. Student responses were to the point.

b

Students were asked to explain the main causes of this phenomenon and most responded successfully.

c

Students were expected to discuss what effects the Brown Cloud could cause and in most cases provided correct responses.

d

This also had many correct answers. However, poor English translations could be blamed for some of the incorrect answers.

Part B

Question 8

Of importance in Part B is the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of a text by analysing and responding to information and conveying the information coherently.

Students were to read a newspaper advertisement and respond by writing a formal letter for the position of a Community Development Officer and there were excellent efforts. According to the question, vacancies are available in four categories and students were asked to apply for the one they preferred. Only a small number of students addressed the one they preferred in these areas, while others wrote general letters. Another weakness was that students were unable to identify the main features of such a formal letter. It would be beneficial for students to do more exercises in the classroom.

Section 3 – Writing in Sinhala

There were four questions on four kinds of writing in this section and students had to answer only one question. This is the section where students were expected to demonstrate their ability to write, show their creativity and express their opinions and ideas.

Question 9

This question required personal and informative writing. Many students selected this, conveying the information succinctly and unobtrusively.

Question 10

This question required persuasive writing and needed a language to influence the target audience. However, the few students who attempted it were not very successful, as they were not familiar with the discourse form over the kind of writing. These students had to create a leaflet but their piece of writing looked more like an essay than a leaflet. In their writing pieces, they included a description of persons, places, emotions and atmosphere, fairly well.

Question 11

Only a couple of students chose to respond to this question. Although they were able to write an imaginary story describing their feelings when they got lost, they seemed to have difficulties explaining the strategies they had to adopt to rejoin the group on the pilgrimage.

Question 12

This question required evaluative writing. Those who attempted the question – ‘Write a script for an evaluative speech on what type of TV programs we should watch’ – presented their facts and ideas rationally and objectively, using evidence to support the contrasting sides. The language used was most suitable for the speech.

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Published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
41 St Andrews Place, East Melbourne 3002

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