



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Almost all of the students were extremely fluent in Tamil. They had remarkably good expression and there were no problems in their intonation or pronunciation. However, some students were unable to score top marks as they used formulaic responses that had obviously been prepared and memorised beforehand. These responses were inadequate or unsuitable as answers to the questions asked.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students who were very proficient in Tamil often answered questions in one or two words. For example, responses to a question such as ‘Did you come early?’ were usually just ‘Yes’, and to ‘Was it difficult to find the location?’ assessors usually received the simple negative response, ‘No’. Students should expand on their answers as much as possible to show their ability to carry the conversation forward. Also, students are expected to know that the examination starts as soon as they walk into the room, and they are expected to respond to உங்கள் மாணவர் இலக்கத்தை ஆங்கிலத்தில் சொல்லுங்கள்.

Some students’ command of suitable items of vocabulary was disappointing. For example, they did not use the Tamil words for ‘school’, ‘junction’, ‘I mean’, ‘late’, ‘uncle’, etc. in their conversation. Students must use only Tamil, including fillers and self-repair strategies.

Section 2 – Discussion

Most of the students memorised prepared articles without undertaking sufficient first hand research. Their Discussion showed good command of vocabulary, idioms and proverbs; however, most of them used the same examples to illustrate their sub-topics and quoted the same ideas and opinions. In this part of the examination all students selected the topic ‘The changing role of women and its impact on society’. Some of the sub-topics were:

- how the dowry system affects women
- working women
- women’s subordination within the family
- widowhood as a problem for women
- problems of the power of mothers-in-law
- problems for women in their countries of migration
- lack of freedom for Tamil women
- domestic violence
- violence related to the dowry
- humiliation of women.

Most students used memorised, formula-like, standard sets of words and phrases in their discussions; for example, ‘on the prohibition of widows remarrying’, ‘there is no equivalent in Tamil for the English term “widower” and ‘baby girls were killed by giving them purging substances’.

Students need to be aware that the discussion should be an exchange, not a presentation. The Discussion is about the sub-topic selected and is based on the student’s Detailed Study, which the student should have spent 15 hours of class time developing. Teachers should put a heavy emphasis on developing students’ ability to use language spontaneously in impromptu situations. By doing this, students’ ability to apply, adapt and manipulate independently what they have learned will grow stronger.

Both the Conversation and Discussion sections require facts, opinions and reasons. Although neither is a test of knowledge, students do need to be able to make links between the texts studied and the sub-topic of the Detailed Study. Students also need to show evidence of original research. Discussions on the effects of the dowry system on women in the Tamil community exemplified this problem. Some examples of the memorised items given by the students included:

- bridegrooms’ mothers demanding the dowry
- usually it is given to their daughters
- most of the brides also wish to get the maximum dowry from their parents.



When asked questions about which group or group of women was thus affected by dowry obligations, students responded in two ways: either with an embarrassed smile or an admission that they had only prepared a limited amount of their sub-topic.

Unfortunately, students' fluency in Tamil was not extensive enough to allow them to sustain a protracted discussion with appropriate, effective and original comments. Indeed, some students used a stock of phrases that contradicted their own arguments without realising it. The overall effect of relying on memorised phrases and sentences made the students appear unable to present an individual, coherent viewpoint on a topic, while addressing the questions asked by the assessors. In some instances this may be because the teacher has emphasised a particular aspect of the sub-topic rather than students conducting own research. It would be better for teachers to allow students to select a sub-topic that they are interested in; students should be inspired about their choice of topic. They will then be better able to produce original research, collect ideas and formulate an independent opinion.

Written Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students who read the questions carefully and underlined or highlighted what information was needed did very well in the examination. Some students demonstrated a good level of clarity of expression, but quite a few spelled some words incorrectly. Common misspelled words included பொருப்பு-பொறுப்பு விரைத்து-விறைத்து and வெல்லை-வேலை, which could have been easily overcome. Students should aim to improve the standard of their written language by avoiding errors in spelling, punctuation and paragraphing. Some students used punctuation without any reasoning, and even the best responses often had no distinct sections or paragraphs.

The amount of space provided and the marks allocated for each question are good indicators of how detailed the answer should be.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1: Listening and responding

Part A

In this part students were presented with three oral texts in Tamil and were required to answer all questions in English. To answer the questions, students had to analyse and use information from the texts, and extract information by inferring points and attitudes from the content or the choice of language. They were also expected to be able to interpret information and summarise ideas or discuss points raised in the texts.

Many students incorrectly assumed that they simply had to understand spoken Tamil, rather than be able to interpret or consider specific information about the purpose and audience of the text. Almost all students listened very well and jotted down all information, but some failed to understand specific aspects of texts.

Text 1

Question 1

The message should contain the following information:

- Mary asked
- Red Cross website
- apply for voluntary position immediately.

Some students received partial credit for their answers if they answered in the third person rather than the second person. Many students failed to mention that Mary sent the message through Seynthan.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Because:

- if he is victorious he will return with the garland of honour
- if he dies he will die honourably and go to heaven.

The word 'destinies' obviously challenged some students' knowledge of English.

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Question 2b.

Any two of:

- soldiers are getting killed in large numbers
- widows are taking their own lives
- as a member of a royal family, she doesn't wish to be an unsympathetic onlooker
- she doesn't wish to be seen as lacking in valour and choosing the option of killing herself in the event that the King gets killed.

Some students found it difficult to find the correct meaning for the word 'concerns'.

Question 2c.

One of the following.

- Widows would kill themselves when their husbands died. It applied to ordinary citizens as well as the royal family. The Queen talks about women taking their lives and taking her own life if the King is killed in battle.
- The social custom of dancing and making music in court. The King says it applies only to the royal family.
- Citizens should do their best for the country. This applies to all, as soldiers are fighting and the King and Queen say they are ready to join them.

Some students failed to answer all three questions in this part.

Text 3

Question 3a.

Any two of:

- Shanker is asking how Niruban has been since last seen in June
- \$500 more than Niruban's
- there were parking difficulties last time.

Question 3b.

Any four of:

- air conditioned
- cushions
- a canteen
- light and sound
- a car park.

Question 3c.

- communication skills: polite, using 'Madam', said to make the function greater, tone, register
- interpersonal skills: friendly, asking about Niruban
- organisation skills: maintaining a diary, remembering customers
- business skills: promoting the hall, introducing the changed fees tactfully

Many students gave the relevant information from the text. It would have been better to use a key word (for example, 'communication') and then to provide information rather than rewriting the texts.

Part B

Text 4

Question 4

- both are saving water
- attached family/husband and wife
- both have a sense of humour

Responses to this question showed that many students did not detect the humour in the text. The question was a global one that required an understanding of linguistic and cultural aspects of the texts.

Text 5

Question 5a.

In listening and speaking, because they watch Sigaram and drama serials with their parents.

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Question 5b.

- by post
- by agents selling in Tamil shops

Question 5c.

The society:

- runs Tamil schools and teaches Tamil
- has concerts
- promotes reading by introducing journals and magazines.

Many students scored full marks for this question.

Section 2: Reading and responding

Part A

Text 6

Question 6a.

- Children's duty to look after their elderly parents at home. Homes for the elderly are not a preferred option.
- The disagreement of mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.
- Relatives living in different countries need to be accommodated in small houses when they visit.
- Wives dominate.

Question 6b.

Unexpectedly, Neela saw her mother in the old-age centre, the same as her mother-in-law. The unkindness Neela displayed towards her mother-in-law and the hurt she inflicted came back on her.

Many students explained the twist very well. Some students understood the idea correctly but could not explain it well.

Question 6c.

Neela – any two of:

- stubborn
- reckless
- biased
- unkind.

Nimalan – any two of:

- pathetic
- grief-stricken
- feeble
- henpecked.

Text 7

Question 7a.

- in oral form, passed from generation to generation
- by writing on palm leaves

Question 7b.

Any two of:

- in melodies/verse form
- by chanting certain sounds as poetry
- by using words with similar sounds.

Question 7c.

Any two of:

- translated into many languages
- available on the Internet
- available on CDs
- Tamil is a refined language.



Question 7d.

- first printing facilities among Tamils
- published handwritten/existing literature and transcripts
- wrote prose himself
- founded two presses in Sithamparam and Jaffna

Part B

Text 8

Question 8

Essays needed to cover areas such as:

- a suitable title
- the language spoken at home
- visiting friends and relatives
- love and openness
- satisfying parents by listening to their views and wishes
- negotiating conflicting issues and values with your parents
- participating in cultural activities together
- learning about parents' views and their cultural heritage
- absorbing information where possible
- group decision making.

Some phrases from the high-scoring responses were:

- அவுஸ்ரேலியக் கலாசாரம் கவர்ச்சியாகப்படலாம் ஆனால் மண்ணின்கலாச்சாரத்தையும் பிணைப்பையும் மறக்கக்கூடாது.
- சுழலும் சக்கரத்தின் சுழலாத பகுதியே மரபு.
- உளரீதியான பிரச்சனை இருந்தாலென்ன உடல்ரீதியான பிரச்சனை இருந்தாலென்ன வெட்கமின்றி வாய்விட்டுப் பேசுங்கள்.
- நட்புரீதியான உறவுப் பாலம் ஒன்றைத் தொடர்ந்து பேணிக்கொள்ளுங்கள்.
- ஆற்றில் ஒரு கால் சேற்றில் ஒரு கால் வையாதீர்.

Section 3: Writing in Tamil

The responses to this section also demonstrated the unfortunate effects of an excessive reliance on preparation/memorisation, and answers that appeared to be prepared and memorised were not assigned full scores. Almost all students demonstrated accuracy and a range of vocabulary and sentence structures.

Question 9

Students who chose this question responded very well, and there were no memorised responses. These students in particular demonstrated relevance and depth of treatment of ideas, information and opinions, the capacity to structure and sequence the response and the capacity to use the conventions of the text type.

Question 10

This was the least popular question, and the quality of information and ideas was not particularly high. Some students who may have had problems with language nevertheless found organising the contexts and ideas challenging.

Question 11

This question asked students to evaluate a Tamil film that had made them rethink their views on Tamil cinema. It was the most popular choice. Most of the students wrote the review with accuracy and a range of vocabulary and sentence structures. They demonstrated the capacity to structure and sequence their response and the capacity to use the conventions of the text type. However, they failed to demonstrate relevance and depth of treatment of ideas, information, or opinions related to the question. For example they just gave 'அந்நியன் பட விமர்சனம்'. Thoughtful, original answers based on personal responses were lacking.

Question 12

This question required a diary entry recording an unforgettable personal experience and was also a popular choice. The responses to this question showed the same types of errors. Many students wrote diary entries in an English style, beginning with the stock phrase 'Dear diary' or 'Dear diary, may you not forget this event' (அன்புள்ள டயரி, டயரி நீயும் மறக்க மாட்டாய் என்று எண்ணுகிறேன்). Even some very able students appeared to be unfamiliar with the diary format and simply wrote articles.