

MALAY (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0546/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The number of candidates for the 2010 session has increased considerably, and it has been noted that this increase is due to the rise in the number of candidates from the existing Centres. This is most encouraging. As usual, there was a good performance from most candidates in this paper, with full marks scored for **Section One**. As the questions grew increasingly demanding for **Section Two** and **Three**, which require written answers to comprehension pieces as well as short writing exercises, marks were lost because of the lack of understanding of the texts given. It was unfortunate to see some candidates who scored well in the earlier sections, suddenly lose marks through what appeared sometimes to be carelessness and, on writing tasks, a disregard for the guides and pointers given as to content. There was ample time given to study the text and pictures but some candidates spent more words than necessary to describe what was not in the picture and certainly not what was requested. On writing tasks, candidates are recommended to use the time given and make sure that they understand what is required.

What is most encouraging in this year's performance is that, even with the increase number of candidates, there were hardly any who took random chunks from the text when answering the comprehension questions. This is in sharp contrast to last year, where answers were sometimes over-long, or randomly taken from mid-sentence, and did not carry sufficient meaning in terms of an answer to the question asked.

However, it is worth noting that, along with the increased number of candidates this year, there seems also to have been a sizeable number of candidates from Indonesia who used Indonesian Malay. Marks were not deducted for this, but in some cases answers could not be awarded when the words used carried a totally different meaning.

The overall performance was quite impressive, and Centres and candidates are to be congratulated on their efforts.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

The vast majority of candidates achieved full marks for this exercise. However, those who had at least one answer wrong, had problems with **Question 4**.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Almost all scored full marks. The answers were clearly accessible in the pictures.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Again, most candidates scored full marks. Those who did not, faltered on **Question 14**.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Candidates were required to write a note to a friend with directions to his/her house from the airport, advice on what sort of transport to take, where to stop and which house to go to. Candidates were given three pictures to guide them.

Most expressed the information from Picture one (of a number 10 bus or coach outside the area). Either coach or bus was accepted, even if the number 10 was not mentioned. However, some went away and mentioned bus numbers that were not there, or named the name of the bus going to a town or roads. While names of places and roads were not required, they do not add to the marks because the communication mark for giving the right bus number was lost.

Picture two was of a park with trees and a big gate, with a bus stop outside. Again, those who lost a mark here did not mention that the stop was outside a park or a garden. Instead, they mentioned a bus station as well as a residential area. Some gave a very long-winded explanation, but failed to mention the bus stop and the park.

Picture three was of a big bungalow with the number seven clearly written on the door. Again, those who lost a communication mark mentioned the colour of the house, on a certain road, but totally ignored the number on the door.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-23

The vast majority of candidates clearly had no problems understanding the text and coped extremely well with the questions. A few had difficulty with **Question 22** and **Question 23(ii)**.

Exercise 2 Question 24

Candidates were required to write about their favourite freetime activity with guided questions. Again, most candidates did very well on this section, describing the kind of activity they enjoy doing, when they started this activity and who they enjoy doing it with. However, as last year, there was a noticeable tendency to repeat answers (such as, for example, why they like the activity) in a kind of conclusion at the end of the essay. More marks could be gained by being more creative and giving more information about the kind of celebration that they enjoy. A little more imagination here might further benefit candidates. Some candidates mentioned several activities, and the whole process was repeated with each activity, which led to slightly indigestible and repetitive texts.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 25-29

This was a multiple-choice exercise and as such did not require candidates to produce answers in written Malay. The majority of candidates coped extremely well but those who lost marks did so on **Question 28**, usually giving D as the answer.

Exercise 2 Questions 30-37

Out of all the exercises in this paper, this was the one where most candidates lost marks.

As last year, there were two particular questions here on which some candidates faltered. In **Question 31**, candidates who lost marks answered that Danial thanked them for their hospitality, when the answer should be either, Lenny's mother's cooking is delicious or Danial was very well treated by the family. Another question, **32**, posed a problem. Danial was surprised that there were old buildings as well as modern ones and that there were many historical sites in Singapore. Those who only mentioned modern buildings failed to gain marks.

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Speaking

General comments

This Speaking Test was common to all candidates, whether Core or Extended, and, as in 2009, a wide range of performance was heard by the Moderators. However, the majority of candidates displayed excellent levels of competence and their range of communication skills was extremely good. They had been appropriately prepared for the test and were familiar with its requirements.

Administration

Regrettably, an increase in the number of clerical errors has been noticed by the Moderators. The following administrative problems were encountered:

- Missing MS1 (computer-printed) Mark Sheets: the Moderator copy of the MS1 Mark Sheet must be included with the materials for moderation to allow Moderators to check that totals have been correctly transferred from the Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet.
- Transcription errors: some Centres recorded different marks on the MS1 Mark Sheets from those recorded on the Working Mark Sheet (Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet). It is essential that all clerical work is completed with care and Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to check that Total Marks are correctly transferred to the MS1 Mark Sheet.
- Errors in addition of marks: Centres are reminded that they must ensure that the addition of each candidate's marks is checked before transfer to the MS1 Mark Sheet.
- Centres are reminded of the need to include the name of the conducting Examiner in the space allowed for this purpose on the Working Mark Sheet (Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet).
- Incorrect candidate numbers: it is crucial that names and numbers on all documentation are correct.
- Use of more than one Teacher/examiner per Centre: where large Centres wish to use more than one Teacher/examiner, permission to do so must be requested from CIE well before **each** Oral examination session. Where permission is granted, internal moderation procedures will need to be put in place in the Centre to ensure that candidates follow a single rank order.
- No access to recording by some Centres. This was due to the fact that the recording onto CD-R by Examiners had been based on an unfamiliar programme which was not compatible with any of the computer programmes used by Moderators. Centres should refer to the Teachers' Notes for guidance.
- Missing Working Mark Sheet. Some Centres did not include their Working Mark Sheets which should ideally be despatched with the cassettes. This makes the moderation process extremely difficult as Moderators have to go through the recording of each candidate and thus lengthens the moderation time.
- Missing examination details and labels on cassettes. Some Centres did not put any details or labels on cassettes, making it very difficult for Moderators to figure out the recordings. This is even more difficult for Centres with bigger number of candidates.

Quality of recording

The vast majority of Centres had taken great care to ensure the audibility of their samples, but work received from a very small number was inaudible in places. This was sometimes the result of poor positioning of the microphone/tape recorder. Centres are reminded of the need to check all equipment prior to the test in the room in which the examination will take place. Examiners should also remember to announce the name and number of each candidate on the recording – the candidate him/herself should not do this. Once started, the recording of each candidate should be continuous: i.e. the tape must not be paused/stopped during an individual candidate's test.

Timings

Timings were usually good, but some Centres persist in not examining candidates for the correct amount of time. Some tests were very short and did not comply with the requirements of the examination. Some were too long and must have become quite tedious for candidates and Examiners. Please remember to ensure that all candidates receive similar treatment in terms of timing.

Preparation of candidates

Most Centres had prepared their candidates in an appropriate way and there was evidence of spontaneous, natural conversation in the two conversation sections. There were, however, a small number of Centres in which candidates were over-prepared, and centres are reminded that under no circumstances must candidates know in advance the questions they are to be asked in the examination. It is also important that the Examiner varies questions between candidates. If candidates are over-prepared, it becomes difficult for Moderators to hear evidence of the ability to cope with unexpected questions in a variety of tenses and candidates are denied access to the top bands of the mark scheme. It was pleasing, however, to note that in the large majority of Centres, Examiners did manage to engage their candidates in a lively, spontaneous and engaging way, following up leads wherever possible. Such Examiners used a variety of questions with different candidates and pitched the level of questioning according to the ability of the candidate being tested.

However, there were also Examiners who did not abide by the instructions given by CIE, especially in the Role plays section where some Examiners created their own tasks. This further confused candidates who had clearly prepared themselves well for the examination but lost marks as they struggled to follow the Examiners' own newly created tasks.

There were also isolated cases of Examiners who whispered the answers to the Role play tasks to candidates during the actual test. This constitutes malpractice and should be avoided by Examiners so as to ensure fairness to all candidates.

There were also one or two cases where Examiners stepped outside the boundaries laid down in the syllabus by including unsuitable topics in the Conversation section. This led to candidate distress, and should most definitely be avoided: the limits of the topic areas are clearly specified and Centres are requested to observe them.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well applied in Centres and marking was often consistently close to the agreed standard.

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Paper 0546/04
Continuous Writing

Question 1

- (a) **Question 1a**, which was the more popular of the two options, required the candidate to write a letter to a friend who had asked about a birthday celebration that he/she had missed. Candidates were required to write about who went to the celebration, about the food for the guests, activities that were planned and carried out and about presents received.

Most candidates handled this question very well, as the subject of a birthday celebration is one that is not unfamiliar to them. Most began at great length about how sad they were that the friend had missed the celebration, some even giving reasons. While these are all very interesting, with a limited number of words given, the candidates should aim to answer the questions first as these are the answers that carry marks. It is noted that when candidates wrote about food that was prepared as well as games played and presents received, many foreign words were used as, understandably, the list of food that was served and activities played included a lot of non-Malay names. Unfortunately, this language could not be counted as ticked and rewarded under the mark scheme. The same was true of presents, in the cases where the presents mentioned were brand names of computer games and electronic gadgets. Only one candidate wrote as if the event had not happened yet, and failed to gain some communication marks.

- (b) **Question 1b** was another informal letter to a friend. The candidate had moved to a new country with his parents and was writing a letter to inform his/her friend about the new School. There was also a requirement to write about the differences between the old school and the new school and what he/she liked about the new school.

Again, this is a subject familiar to the candidates, especially those who had actually moved to another country. While most answered the stimulus questions, it is the choice of words used that sometimes caused problems, in that candidates could not find the right term to mean making new friends and frequently used the wrong prepositions.

It is also of concern that colloquial language and sms/chatroom language was sometimes used. Some candidates spelt words according to how they hear them: examples are ketawar (ketawa), pulak (pula), bikin. There was also little understanding of the difference between ada and adalah.

Question 2

This question required candidates to continue a story from an outlined situation. (You were at home alone revising for an exam when there was a total blackout in the residential area where you live. What happened next?)

While most candidates handled this question well, describing a power failure and the ensuing problems, such as thieves attempting to break into their house or a neighbour's house, some took the route of a horror movie which turned out to be a nightmare. Most were very imaginative. However, what is of concern here is a mistake that occurs quite often every year.

Some candidates failed to notice the important phrase in the question: "What happened next?"

Candidates who make this mistake are often those who are very good at the language. Disregarding the question, some began with a lengthy, albeit interesting start of the story about how they were left at home to revise. These candidates soon wrote beyond the total word limit, so that whatever interesting adventures

were invented after that point could not be counted for communication or language. Some, like [redacted], disregarded the fact that they were alone, and wrote about parents or siblings being around them, or revising with a friend.

In general, it has been a delightful experience reading such imaginative and creative accounts by candidates, but it is emphasised that those who aim to gain the highest marks must read the instructions properly.