



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most students performed fairly well in the 2007 Sinhala oral examination, with some scoring very high marks for all criteria. However, there were also a few very weak students who had difficulty in expressing their ideas and information. Generally there was a wide range of vocabulary used, and good language skills demonstrated. A few students used English words in the oral examination; this was mostly evident among the interstate students.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Criterion 1 and Criterion 5 – Communication

Most students carried on the conversation with some spontaneity and good repair strategies. They demonstrated a good comprehension of the questions asked, responded to them efficiently and related to the assessors very effectively. However, there were also some instances where the assessors had to ask many questions in order to support the student and reach the time limit. Though the pronunciation of Sinhala words was fairly good in many students, there was a lack of intonation and tempo in many instances.

Criterion 2 – Content

There was a wide range of high quality information conveyed on the relevant topics for the conversation – family, friends, school and home life, and leisure and future aspirations. However, it was evident that some students had memorised the information and were relying on rote-learned passages without actually responding directly, or relating, to the assessors' questions. There were only a few instances where the students expressed their own opinions in relation to or supported by the information they were providing. For example:

'I would like to complete my education and go back to Sri Lanka.'

'Why do you want to go back to Sri Lanka?'

'To help underprivileged people.'

'How do you think you can help them?'

Criterion 3 and Criterion 4 – Language

Some students used an excellent range of vocabulary to accurately describe the message they wanted to convey. These students consistently used an appropriate style and register. However, there were also some instances where the same word was repeated over and over again; although the student's point was clearly conveyed and understood, this demonstrated a limited range of vocabulary. Some students, in particular the interstate students, used English words in their conversation. In general, all students used appropriate style and register.

Section 2 – Discussion

Some of the topics below were chosen by students in the 2007 oral examination.

Topic 1: The Sinhala Speaking Communities

Visiting Sri Lanka

- The Kandy City

Customs and Traditions

- Sinhala New Year customs and rituals
- Sinhala New Year and the importance of auspicious times
- Sinhala New Year and folk games and New Year
- History of the New Year celebration
- Comparison of New Year celebrations in Australia and Sri Lanka
- Sinhala New Year and celebrations yesterday, today and tomorrow
- Sinhala New Year and the mass media
- Scientific background of the customs followed at the Sinhala New Year festival

2007 Assessment Report



Topic 2: The Changing World

Environmental Issues

- Water pollution
- Air pollution
- Pollution due to the use of polythene

Technological Change

- The impact of technology on education
- The impact of the Internet on education
- Has the technological advance benefited or harmed mankind?

The World of Work

- Are the expectations of women employed in the Middle East being fulfilled?
- Are female graduates in Sri Lanka appropriately employed?

Although students clearly demonstrated some preparation for their chosen sub-topic, they had often prepared a descriptive or informative presentation in which they did not provide their own ideas and opinions. Assessors had to probe the students about the relevance and their individual point of view on their topics. For example; students who discussed the customs and auspicious times of the Sinhala New Year were very informative but often failed to provide their own opinions about these topics; and students who discussed folk games provided good descriptions of the various games but the links to the New Year festival were often not discussed.

Criterion 1 and Criterion 5 – Communication

Most students were confident in the Discussion, and many students demonstrated good repair strategies and good pronunciation. Some students stressed the important facts and had good intonation and tempo. There were a few instances where the assessors' support was needed to continue with the Discussion and reach the time limit as the student struggled with difficult expressions. There were also a few instances where it was evident that the information was memorised.

Criterion 2 – Content

Many students demonstrated thorough preparation of the topic and presented excellent information; however, there was a lack of presentation of their own ideas and opinions on some of the topics, which is required by this criterion. Most students responded well to the questions asked by the assessors. There were only a few instances where the students were hesitant in providing information due to reasons other than poor preparation, for example limited vocabulary. Many students had prepared posters and provided sources for their information as evidence of preparation.

Criterion 3 and Criterion 4 – Language

There were some instances where an excellent range of vocabulary was used in an appropriate manner. Most students used the appropriate style and register, while a few had difficulty in expressing information, ideas and opinions due to limited vocabulary. They also had limited control of style and register.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

In general the 2007 Sinhala written examination was well done by most students. This year, most students identified when there were two parts within the same question and responded appropriately. Students were penalised if they wrote their responses in point form even though the question clearly required students to explain. Students should pay more attention and ensure that they answer the questions as required by the instructions provided within the question.

In the English parts, there were a few instances where students lost marks because the appropriate English term was not used in the answer. Students should be encouraged to use dictionaries for this purpose. In some instances students had written the correct answer in Sinhala, but a different answer in English.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Text 1

Question 1a.

Both of:

- VCE students
- parents.

Both answers were expected, and most students answered correctly.

Question 1b.

Either of:

- by saving money spent on classes
- by saving time spent on attending classes.

Although only one answer was expected, most students identified both reasons.

Question 1c.

Both of:

- it explains how to solve problems step by step
- it has maths problems for students to practise and the solutions provided.

Both responses were expected. There were a few instances where only one response was given, but this question was generally well attempted.

Text 2

Question 2a.

On this day Namal Uyana will be declared as a World Heritage site.

Some students failed to give the exact term 'World Heritage site' even though they had written the correct Sinhala term in their notes. They had tried to describe it in other words but the correct meaning was not evident.

Question 2b.

Either of:

- he discovered/reintroduced Namal Uyana, which was lost to the wilderness
- he looked after the site.

Most students explained this correctly.

Question 2c.

One of:

- it is the national tree of Sri Lanka
- most parts of the tree are used to make native medicines
- Diya Na is endemic to Sri Lanka.

Only one response was expected. The second response above was the most popular choice.

Question 2d.

Both of:

- pink quartz has been taken to India to build the Taj Mahal
- beads and rings made with pink quartz were discovered during excavations.

Both responses were expected for full marks. Most students gave the first response correctly. For the second response, 'the pink quartz was used to make jewellery' was accepted, but that quartz was used to make 'diamonds', 'corals' or 'pearls' was not accepted as a correct response.

2007 Assessment Report



Text 3

Question 3a.

Rise

- Rice is the staple food in Sri Lanka.
- Kings gave priority to paddy cultivation.
- Reservoirs and canals were made to supply water to paddy fields.

Fall

- Emphasis was given to other cultivations.
- It was more profitable to grow other crops like tea, rubber and cinnamon.
- Farmers lost interest in paddy cultivation.

At least one response for the rise and one for the fall were required to get full marks. If three responses were given for the same category only two marks were given. There were many successful attempts at this question.

Question 3b.

Any three of:

- reservoirs and canals were repaired
- agricultural settlements were established
- fertilisers were supplied at a concessional rate
- farmers were given insurance for their crops
- facilities were provided for selling the crop.

Any three of the above responses were given full marks. Students who wrote 'farmers were given soil for fertilisers' or 'farmers were given houses to live in instead of agricultural settlement' were not given marks, although a mark was given for 'lands and houses' or 'lands were given to the farmers'. Many students lost a mark or two for this question.

Question 3c.

Any four of:

- stop importing flour to Sri Lanka
- popularise the food made with rice flour
- expand the storage facilities
- have a long term plan
- increase the demand for rice to reduce the storage period.

Most students were able to identify at least two correct responses.

Part B – Answer in Sinhala

Text 4

Question 4a.

Any two of:

- he mastered all forms of traditional dancing
- he popularised Sri Lankan dancing in the world
- he dedicated his life to dancing
- he produced the Sinhala ballets Nala Damayanthi and Karadiya which were staged in other countries
- he learnt kathakali dance form from India.

Any two of the above responses were given full marks. Most students identified two correct responses.

Question 4b.

Both of:

- he was presented with many awards
- he was given honorary titles.

Both responses were expected. Most students responded correctly.

2007 Assessment Report



Text 5

Question 5a.

Any three of:

- cooking kiribath /milk rice at the auspicious time
- eating milk rice at an auspicious time
- respecting the elders by offering betel leaves and worshipping them
- exchanging money and food with neighbours
- visiting the elders or relatives
- sharing food with neighbours.

Any three of the above responses received full marks. 'Eating milk rice' was not given marks unless it specifically stated 'at an auspicious time'. Most students scored full marks for this question.

Question 5b.

It is not a holiday in Australia.

Almost all students answered this question correctly.

Question 5c.

Any two of:

- *ane paue*
- *ane nikam inna*
- *oyata hulanne.*

Some students tried to explain the sister's feelings without writing the expressions that she used. Most responses were correct.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Text 6

Question 6a.

Both of:

- to pay respect to the tooth relic of Lord Buddha
- to receive blessings to have rains for agricultural activities/farming.

Most students gave both responses but a few gave only the first response.

Question 6b.

Any two of:

- it is a very popular festival in Sri Lanka which is well known all over the world
- it is considered to be a cultural festival
- it includes various forms of dance, drumming and folk songs of both Sinhala and Tamil origin.

Any two correct responses were given full marks. No students identified the first response above.

Question 6c.

Any three of:

- young men do not like to participate in traditional dancing
- artists who are doing other jobs do not have time to come for practices
- some owners charge high fees to give their elephant
- some elephants have died due to old age
- the elephants with special body features, for training to carry the tooth relic, are rarely found.

Most students scored full marks for this question.

Question 6d.

- Meaning: Appropriate steps or precautions must be taken before the real disaster happens.



- Relevance: Steps must be taken to find the elephants and trained dancers or artists for the event to maintain its standards.

Students were awarded one mark for the meaning and two marks for the relevance. Some students explained the meaning in the same context as in the figure of speech; that is, 'the roof should be repaired before the whole house collapses' or some disaster happens.

For relevance, students who stated 'some steps should be taken to overcome the challenges and continue with the Perahara' were awarded only one mark. Full marks were only awarded if the answer mentioned finding the elephants and the artists for the event. Almost all students missed out on two marks for this question, since they failed to explain the relevance correctly.

Text 7

Question 7a.

The roots of the trees absorb water from the (deep layers of) earth. The water vapour is evaporated to air by the trees, which helps to form the rain clouds.

There were many correct answers to this question.

Question 7b.

Any three of:

- the drought had affected the farming
- due to clearing of the forests there are landslides during the rainy season which cause a lot of damage
- animals lose their habitats which leads to the extinction of some species
- the removal of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas by trees decreases, which results in global warming.

Any three of the correct responses above were given full marks. Many students answered correctly.

Question 7c.

Any three of:

- more space was needed for the growing population to build houses
- timber was needed to build houses and furniture for the growing population
- trees were cut down to construct roads
- trees were cut for other constructions and buildings required for the people.

Any three of the above responses were given full marks. Many students responded correctly.

Question 7d.

Both of:

- climate changes
- we should take steps to conserve/preserve the forests.

Two marks were given for the two responses above. 'Weather change' and 'global warming' were not considered correct for the first part of the question as this information was not given in the text. Planting trees was not considered correct for the second part for the same reason. Many students answered correctly.

Part B – Answer in Sinhala

Text 8

Marks were awarded as per the following lists.

Format of the letter

- personal address/date
- addressing the coordinator
- topic for the letter
- formal ending

2007 Assessment Report



Language

- Formal and persuasive language needed to be used

Content

- Students were awarded marks for providing details and supporting them with evidence.

Most students had a good knowledge about the format of an official letter. There were a few instances where students lost a mark or two for not writing the topic and not addressing the letter to the coordinator. Formal language was used in almost all letters. Some students provided evidence to support their qualifications and skills (which was required by the task), while some provided only the information.

It was evident that the interstate students were not properly informed about different types of writing nor were they aware of the format of a formal letter.

Section 3 – Writing in Sinhala

Students were able to choose any one of the questions from 9 to 12. Fifteen marks were available for Section 3. The following aspects were taken into consideration.

Question 9

Format

- topic
- name of the reporter

Language

- formal language
- vocabulary
- sentence structure

Content

- elaboration of two points as advantages
- elaboration of two points as disadvantages
- organisation of information and ideas

The majority of students chose this text for the writing section. Most students elaborated well on the advantages and disadvantages of tourism to Sri Lanka. A very few missed out on the topic and the name. The language was appropriate in most responses.

Question 10

Format

- separation by days or dates (a minimum of three days)

Language

- informal language
- mostly in first person

Content

- description of the events, the significance of the events and the relevance of the writing
- organisation of ideas and information

The few responses to this text were generally good. The students were aware of the format required; that is, to separate the days/dates.

Question 11

Format

- topic
- introduction
- separation of sub-topics

2007 Assessment Report



Language

- formal language and vocabulary

Content

- information provided
- relevance of the information to the sub-topics

No students responded to this question.

Question 12

Format

- topic
- name of the author

Language

- appropriateness of language

Content

- appropriate beginning and ending
- content of the story (originality and creativeness)
- relevance of the writing to the saying

Many students chose this topic. There were some very creative pieces of writing that reflected the saying appropriately.