

# FIRST LANGUAGE MALAY

Paper 0696/01  
Reading and Directed Writing

## Key messages

This was the first year of this new syllabus.

Candidates should:

- look for implicit and explicit meanings and messages that the writer is trying to convey in Text A
- read the story more than once to understand the theme and the messages that the writer is trying to convey
- make targeted use of the information provided in Texts B and C for Question 2.

## General comments

Many candidates were able to answer well. In general, performance was better in **Section 2** than in **Section 1**.

In **Section 1**, candidates should be prepared to “read between the lines” to deduce the information required, as some questions will require implicit understanding.

In **Section 2**, information is provided in the texts. Candidates need to select the information they want to include and manipulate it to meet the demands of the task.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Many candidates answered correctly either by saying the bird was hungry, the writer’s father had placed a ripe banana there or because the bird is accustomed to being fed there. Those who simply answered ‘to get food’ also got a mark. It was not sufficient to say ‘because there was a bebuas tree nearby’.
- (b) Many candidates only answered the first part, ‘senang’. Only a few attempted to paraphrase or use their own words to answer this. Most reproduced the sentences that showed the vegetables were within reach.
- (c) Most gave the correct answer showing the eagerness of the children to video call their grandfather. Others appropriately quoted the mother saying that the children could not wait for him to visit them or quoted the children’s reminder to video call the grandfather. Others looked further for the answer showing that the children continued chatting with the grandfather and showed their happiness when the grandfather arrived at their doorsteps one week early.
- (d) Some candidates copied relevant parts of the text where it shows that the plants were dying or suffering from neglect since the mother passed away. This was accepted as it shows the mother’s absence caused the plants to be neglected. However, they did not all answer the second part: the plants too were suffering because of the loss of the mother / the plants too felt the loss.

‘Tanaman-tanaman ini juga nampaknya meratapi/merasai kesedihan dengan ketiadaannya’

Some misinterpreted this sentence: ‘banyak termenung, banyak bersedih di beranda hadapan rumah’ attributing it to the plants that ‘were pensive and sad sitting on the veranda.’ It is actually the father who was sad and sitting on the veranda.

- (e) A few candidates found this question difficult, but most were able to correctly identify the answer.

The message in this part of the text was that the video call affected the writer in many ways; she could see her father was neglecting himself since her mother’s death, she could also see the plants outside; dying and being neglected too. While she was grateful for the call as that reduced her longing for her father, it also made her sad as she realised that her father needed to be cared for but was still reluctant to move in with her in the city as according to him, he would miss the herbs in his own garden.

Some candidates saw the effect of the video phone call as a positive one as that was the turning point for the daughter to change her garden to make it look like her father’s garden. This is a way of persuading him to move in with her.

- (f) Many candidates answered correctly, saying that the father would miss the herbs in his own garden. However, the other possible and acceptable answer was that he would also miss the visits to his wife’s grave.
- (g) Many candidates answered this well, stating the feeling as sad/despair (because all she could see was fake, sterile but expensive grass, compared to her father’s garden of herbs). Other candidates said that the writer felt positive as it made her want to change her garden. This was also acceptable. Several candidates wrote ‘mengeluh panjang’ (long sigh) as an answer to how she felt. A long sigh is not a feeling. However, a long sigh showing despair was acceptable.
- (h) Many answered this question correctly, especially those who understand the meaning of ilham (inspiration).
- (i) Strong candidates gained both marks by stating that the start of the business was her neighbours realising she had plants and wanting to buy them, and then from there the news spread and she began selling online/conduct workshops. Weaker candidates wrongly thought that the business started online.
- (j) Many candidates were able to answer this question. Among the acceptable answers were: father arriving a week earlier, father showing interest to help with the garden, father offering to advertise by doing videos to attract customers and father saying he was willing to live with her.
- (k) (i) Strong candidates correctly interpreted this, depicting the bird as a show off, boastful or arrogant.
- (ii) Many answered correctly, with the writer’s longing for her village and her father.
- (iii) Most candidates found this difficult, maybe because they did not understand the word ‘kumis’ (moustache). The fact that the moustache was left to grow all over his ageing face implied that the father no longer cared about how he looked, he was neglecting himself.
- (iv) The correct answer should have included references to the memories of the writer’s time in her village and being refreshed by the rain/water of the monsoon season. Some answered that the monsoon season brought back lots of memories of her time there, which was also acceptable.
- (v) Only the strongest candidates answered correctly. The father was struggling with emotions and could not speak, he started coughing to hide his emotions and found it hard to continue talking.
- (vi) Many answered this correctly. The phrase was used to imply that the writer was busy and could not cope and needed help.
- (viii) Only the strongest candidates understood the message that the writer was relaying. They correctly wrote that the father realised that he had enough happy memories with his wife and, as he accepts that she is no longer with him, he is now prepared to spend time with his daughter and grandchildren, creating new memories together.

## **Section B**

The danger of plastic and ways to reduce its use.

Candidates needed to read both texts and then, in their own words, write about the effects of plastic on our life, animals, the climate and environment. They were also asked to write about how to deal with threats of the silent killer.

## **Content**

Guided by information both texts, most candidates did well. Some expanded and elaborated on the points given, linking them well. They included many relevant points and, in some cases, added their own knowledge about the danger of plastic.

Candidates do not have to include every point from the texts; they can select those that they feel are most relevant/useful. They should elaborate on the points, providing opinions, justifications, examples in a clear and logical sequence.

This task was in the format of a speech. It is important to have a clear structure with a brief introduction to the topic, main body of the speech and then a short conclusion. There is no need to write a lengthy introduction and address to the audience.

## **Language**

Candidates are encouraged to use their own language to write the speech, apart from the opening sentence provided in the rubric.

Strong candidates successfully used their own words, including linking words that reflected the formal template as taught in schools. The language used in the speech was impressive. Weaker candidates relied on copying sentences from the texts to form the basis of their speech

Idioms and expressions, when chosen carefully and appropriately, can enhance a piece of writing. However, it is important not just to use them for the sake of it, and candidates should not feel that they need to include as many as they can think of.

In general, the most frequent language errors were in the use of prefixes and suffixes.

# FIRST LANGUAGE MALAY

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Paper 0696/02  
Composition

## Key messages

This was the first year of this new syllabus.

Candidates should:

- read all the questions before selecting which to answer
- study the syllabus and mark scheme prior to the examination to ensure that they understand the requirements of the tasks
- keep in mind to write between 300 – 400 words
- be aware of the target audience of each task and ensure the use of appropriate register and tone throughout
- respond well to the question asked, demonstrating fluency, well-developed ideas and adequate control of grammar, idiom, vocabulary, spelling, discourse marker (*penanda wacana*) and sentence completion.

## General comments

In **Section 1**, the most popular question among the candidates was **Question 1(c)**. The question was to write an article to a newspaper on the subject, 'Exposure to social media has a negative impact on teenagers. Do you agree?'. Most candidates demonstrated good understanding, sound knowledge and clarity. The least popular choice among the candidates was **Question 1(d)**. The question asked the candidates to write an article to be published on a personal blog. The question read 'Youths of today are giving less importance to cultures and customs.' The few candidates who opted to answer this question wrote well, giving clear expression with good details and understanding.

Overall, many strong candidates were able to demonstrate their understanding of the language, using carefully defined, logical and well-constructed sentences. They clearly expressed their views with convincing explanation including facts, opinions, and some complex ideas. The writing successfully included persuasive techniques such as emotive language and information.

If candidates choose to write a discursive essay, they should clearly present a balanced discussion of the issue by presenting both sides with equally relevant explanations and examples. They should make sure there is a cohesive progression of each point being presented by using transitional wording leading into the next paragraph.

Most candidates were able to write good arguments, providing evidence and justification. Some candidates wrote clear and persuasive statements providing examples, statistics and personal anecdotes to support their arguments. Weaker candidates were inconsistent in their arguments. For example, they presented scattered arguments which were not well-developed. Some were inconsistent, agreeing with the given statement in their introduction, and disagreeing in the conclusion.

In **Section 2**, candidates who achieved very good or good marks for content wrote essays featuring an outstanding description or narration which engaged the reader throughout. The best candidates were able to describe the atmosphere and the situation as required by the question and used complex choice of words and linguistic devices such as metaphors, personification, and similes.

In descriptive tasks, candidates should describe the atmosphere and emotions experienced by using appropriate sensory details. They should address the requirements of the question in vivid detail and avoid any storytelling in their writing. In addition, for the description to be effective, candidates must remember to write in a style which means that the reader can clearly imagine the scenario they have described. When

describing something that appeals to our five senses, candidates can use imagery such as similes or metaphors. However, many candidates had difficulty describing the situation using all sensory situations.

In narrative tasks, candidates need to demonstrate an ability to utilise literary devices to make their story more varied and appealing. Candidates could explore the characters' background and build tension into their story to make it more interesting. Most candidates were capable of narrating events with ease. Some wrote their story with simple narrative without any exploration of the characters, setting of the story or even tension. Others were able to explore their writing and create a story that incorporated elements of tension and a reasonable climax. Some candidates were also able to use direct speech/dialogue effectively. Other candidates seemed to focus too much on the plot and content and forgot detailed illustrations and elements that appeal to readers.

## Language

The best responses combined high levels of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Most of the work by the candidates was characterised by a fair level of accuracy despite some clumsiness and occasional lapses in clarity of meaning. Weaker essays tended to be simple and laboured. There were several recurrent weaknesses and errors with the following seen often:

- differentiating between the words, 'kami' and 'kita'. For example: if a candidate is enjoying the meal with his/her family and/or friends, they should write 'Kami menjamu selera', instead of 'kita menjamu selera'
- errors in applying affixes. Many candidates attached an incorrect affix to a base word like: 'Aku menjalan ke arah pantai'. 'Setelah beberapa minit aku tertiba di pantai'. 'Aku melihat banyak jenis makanan', 'Kenderaan menglepaskan asap'
- the correct use of 'di' as a preposition or as an affix; 'di mana' is correct whereas 'dimana' is not. Moreover, candidates should be aware of the correct use of 'ke' as a preposition or as an affix; 'ke sana' is correct whereas 'kesana' is not
- spelling: berasah (should be berasa), sujuk (should be sejuk), tiba (tiba), penggallaman (pengalaman)
- mistakes in translations such as facilities (should be fasiliti/kemudahan), subject (should be subjek), tradition (should be tradisi). Candidates should know the Malay words used in Malaysia. Some candidates translated directly from English, for example 'hujan kucing dan anjing'
- avoid spoken slang language that is not appropriate when writing, for example: dikit (should be 'sedikit')
- plural sentences used incorrectly such as 'para remaja-remaja suka bermain permainan video' and 'banyak kemudahan-kemudahan di sekolah'
- writing long sentences without commas or full stops. There were some instances where questions were without question marks and quotations without quotation marks. There were also errors in not using capital letters for proper nouns and conjunctions either missing or wrongly used.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section 1

#### Question 1

- (a) Strong candidates created a well-structured letter in the correct format, with realistic information about the positive sides of the current school systems, creative suggestions on how the school could improve and ideas to prepare candidates for the modern future. Successful responses were precise and straightforward while also showing humility and politeness as the letter is meant to be sent to the Ministry of Education.

- (b) Successful candidates wrote a range of interesting points to convince about the advantages of this topic. They used appropriate points and presented their ideas in the format of an article, and not a list of points, bullet points or numbers. Weaker candidates tended to repeat the main ideas and presented the discussion by not presenting both sides with equally relevant explanations and examples.
- (c) This was a popular question and there were many excellent essays. Many candidates approached this argumentative essay well and were persuasive in presenting their point of view either for or against social media. They provided convincing explanation and evidence to support their opinions. The arguments were well developed and linked logically. Some weaker candidates merely commented on how 'bad' or 'good' social media can be for teenagers without giving evidence or drawing conclusions to the given topic.
- (d) This was the least popular question among the candidates. Most candidates who chose this topic either agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Youths of today are giving less importance to cultures and customs.' Sufficient and convincing rationale and examples were given to justify their ideas. This question was chosen mainly by strong candidates who had good understanding of the topic and language proficiency.

## **Section 2**

### **Question 2**

#### **(a) and (b)**

Strong candidates were able to give well-developed and well-sequenced descriptions including a variety of interesting details, and images. The reader was able to feel the atmosphere because of the use of appropriate and well-chosen vocabulary. The structure of the response was clear and consistent. Appropriate use of literary devices helped to create a clear image and maintain the reader's attention.

#### **(c) and (d)**

Successful candidates created an interesting plot and maintained the reader's engagement with the build-up of tension of the story and a well-managed climax. Some essays made effective use of a "twist" ending. Character development was reasonable and believable. Overall, many candidates were able to understand and write effectively, despite some negligible plot holes.