

SWAHILI

Paper 3162/01

Paper 1

Key Messages

- When translating from Swahili into English candidates should aim for precision in conveying meaning.
- After writing in Swahili, candidates should take care to check their work to ensure correct and consistent spelling and use of grammar.
- When answering comprehension questions, candidates may need to deduce their answers from the information in the passage.
- Candidates should beware of answering comprehension questions by indiscriminate “lifting” from the passage.
- When writing compositions it is important to plan beforehand, to write in clear paragraphs, and to respect the word limits specified.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Question 1 was generally answered well. The narrative style of the passage seemed to allow for an easier translation. The main mistakes occurred in relation to the following:

1. The translation of *hakuridhika*. Some candidates mistranslated it as “she was not convinced”.
2. The translation of *niliyojifunza*. The issue here was not with the *-yo-* but with the translation of the verb itself. Despite the common usage of *-jifunza-* in everyday Swahili a number of candidates became confused by the presence of the reflexive marker *-ji-* and thus translated the above as “which I taught myself”.
3. The translation of the idiom *nilikata shauri*. Many candidates translated this as “I wanted”, “I did not hesitate” or “I began/started” rather than “I decided”
4. The translation of *viembe*. Many candidates translated this merely as “thing” and so did not include the living aspect, as in “beings/creatures”
5. The translation of *makazi*. Many candidates were deceived by the presence of *kazi* in the word and so translated this as “place of work”
6. The translation of *urithi*. A number of candidates struggled to give an accurate translation or paraphrase of this word. The majority seemed to translate it as “wealth”, which does not convey the impression of it being passed down as inheritance.
7. The translation of the sentence *Mazingira pia yanaipatia nchi mahitaji yote ya msingi kwa ajili ya kufanikisha jamii na uchumi*. In particular, few candidates accurately translated the notion of success in *kufanikisha* and used “to help”. While a number of candidates were able to translate *mahitaji* correctly, few excluded *ya msingi*.

Overall, candidates were more successful in translating the first and last paragraphs but less so in the middle section. In terms of difficulty this question was similar to the equivalents in previous years.

Question 2

As in previous years, **Question 2** was the one that the majority of candidates found more difficult, an effective differentiator of candidates’ abilities.

Overall this question was a good test of a candidate's comprehension of Swahili vocabulary, syntax and grammar. While some candidates performed well in this questions, some others had difficulty. The following were some common errors:

1. Errors in agreement were surprisingly common throughout the translations. Often a candidate would get an agreement correct in one section but then wrong in a following section despite the noun class and number being the same. The most common mistake of agreement occurred when translating the following: "A lack of rain and a rise in the price of equipment has made it a difficult period for farmers." Candidates failed to relate "has made it..." with "a lack of..." and/or "a rise in". Thus, there were sentences such as *Ukosefu wa mvua na upandaji wa bei za vifaa imefanya...or Kukosekana kwa mvua na kupanda kwa bei za vifaa umefanya...*
2. Spelling mistakes were also common and were often inconsistent, with candidates, for example, writing *mimea* in one sentence and then *mimnea* in the next. Other examples of misspelling are *maindi* rather than *mahindi* and *kuaribu* rather than *kuharibu* in which candidates seemed to spell words as they speak them rather than in the standardized way as found in the dictionary.
3. There were frequent sentence separation errors, especially in the writing of verbs. Examples are *ina fanya* rather than *inafanya* or *yanaweza haribu* rather than *yanaweza kuharibu*.
4. The translation of "in the last four years". Candidates often wrote merely *miaka minne iliyopita* which, while grammatically correct, means "four years ago". This suggests the rise in food prices as a historical statistic rather than a continuous trend.
5. A number of candidates translated "between" as *katikati* rather than *kati* or *kati ya*.
6. The section "particularly for crops" caused problems for two reasons. Firstly, a number of candidates did not translate "particularly" at all. Secondly, there was a tendency among some candidates to translate "crops" as *mimea* rather than *mazao*.
7. One, two or three of the crops "wheat, rice and corn" were frequently either omitted or translated incorrectly. The most common mistake seemed to be in the translation of "wheat" as *unga* or *wimbi*. All three crops caused problems for candidates. The translation of food items also caused problems later in the text with "cassava and "sweet potatoes" often being omitted or replaced with an English borrowing such as *kasava*.
8. Modifiers such as "therefore", "although" and "also" were often missed out of a sentence.
9. "East Africa" was often translated using the English word order as *Mashariki Afrika* or the English spelling of *Africa Mashariki*. A number of candidates also mistakenly used the Swahili words for north, south and west.
10. One, two or all three of "farmers, traders and customers" were frequently either omitted or mistranslated. Candidates often mistranslated "farmers".
11. "Traditional crops" was often either mistranslated or lacking in the correct agreements. A common mistake was to write *vyakula kienyeji* rather than *vyakula vya kienyeji*.
12. "Region" was also mistranslated and candidates often instead replaced the idea of a specific area with a generic or an expansive one. Thus *kote*, *kila pahala* and even *duniani* were common replacements.
13. The translation of "being encouraged" also proved difficult. Candidates often used a harsher verb than *-himizwa* such as *-lazimishwa*, *ambiwa* or *-agizwa*.
14. The translation of relative clauses was rarely achieved without error. The candidates' knowledge of this element of grammar was challenged the most in the sections "they can damage the areas in which they are grown" and "which are dry due to low rainfall" and overall candidates struggled with this. This was not helped by the fact that the clauses were in the locative tenses. For example, using the first section as an example, candidates would often write *maeneo yanayopandwa* rather than *maeneo yanapopandwa*. In this case, a knowledge of the relative clause has been displayed, but the candidate has struggled to recognise the locative element. However, it has to be said that more often than not no attempt at using the relative clause was made. Thus, it was common to read translations such as *maeneo yanapandwa*.

Overall, this passage was about at the right level to challenge the candidate's knowledge of Swahili and it did enable the more talented candidates to shine through. It was perhaps a little more difficult than the 2010 paper.

Question 3

It is encouraging to note that candidates fared well in answering this question. It is recommended that teachers convey the following two points to their candidates:

- (a) Candidates need to read the passage with care and attention as the answer required might not be a straightforward factual data but a reasoned deduction from the data given in the passage
- (b) Candidates should be trained to answer comprehension questions in their own words, i.e. without 'lifting' sentences from the passage. The rubric to the question makes this very clear.

Question 4

Question 4 was another excellent test of a candidate's written Swahili. Of the three topics, the majority of the candidates seemed to have picked the third option ("My favourite thing to do when I am not in School is...").

Good answers stood out when through candidates' confident use of varied vocabulary, idiom, accurate spelling and punctuation, and the correct separation of sentences and paragraphs. It is important to repeat what has been stated in previous reports: that it is recommended that teachers train candidates to plan their compositions.

Other than this, the most common errors were the following:

- Poor spelling.
- Use of English words or borrowings.
- Repetition of sentences and sentence structures. This became especially true with the third answer dealing with hobbies (*ninapenda ku... kwa sababu. Ninapenda pia ku... kwa sababu. Halafu ninapenda... kwa sababu*)
- Mistakes in agreements.
- Lack of variety in tenses or incorrect uses of tenses. Candidates often overused the habitual tense, presumably due to confusion over which was the past, present or future.
- Writing about irrelevant subjects. Some candidates would start the passage by addressing the question directly, but would then begin writing in detail about unrelated topics.
- A lack of balance in option (a). As the question asks the candidate to discuss, an excellent answer should look at both sides of the argument. Very few did this.
- Excessively long answers. Candidates should note that the answer has a limit of a specified number of words.

Conclusions

The paper was sufficiently challenging and comparable in difficulty compared to last year's paper. The following recommendations are made for teachers responsible for preparing candidates for this paper. Candidates should be made to focus on:

- Accuracy of tenses and a warning not to over-rely on the habitual tense.
- Accuracy of agreements and object markers.
- Practising techniques of answering comprehension questions in own words.
- Correct practices for sentence separation and paragraphing.
- Practising essay writing and how to correctly structure an argument.
- Ensuring that candidates practise spelling using the rules of standard Swahili and not of local variations.