



PSAC 2017

Grade 6 English

Subject code: **P110**

Examiners' Report

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

April 2018

Introduction

2017 saw the introduction of the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Examination. In this context, the English assessment has been completely revised, with the assessment objectives aligned with the new learning aims of the redesigned National Curriculum Framework.

Different linguistic competencies are assessed in the revamped assessment, and are divided as follows:

- Reading Comprehension (40%)
- Grammar and Vocabulary (30%)
- Writing (30%)

A particular feature of the new English assessment is that each competency is assessed at different levels, ensuring greater fairness by giving candidates a better chance to show their achievement levels.

General Comments

The performance of candidates was encouraging, with nearly 80% of candidates achieving at least Grade 5 and with the mean mark being around 61. This suggests that for the great majority of candidates, the essential skills in reading and writing have been acquired. There still remains a minority of candidates (around 15%), however, who seem not to have acquired even the very basic skills required to successfully complete their primary education.

While these findings are encouraging in terms of **quantity**, it is also worth highlighting that there is an important margin for improvement when it comes to the **quality** of performances. The great majority of candidates performed well on the basic and intermediate tasks across the competencies being assessed, but the higher order skills of extended reading and writing show that improvement is warranted.

In vocabulary, tasks assessing knowledge and application of basic, everyday vocabulary were well done by the vast number of candidates. However, being able to use varied and precise vocabulary in the writing tasks was more challenging.

In reading comprehension, the basic skill of locating explicit information has been mastered by the majority of candidates. However, there is still improvement that can be brought to the development of more sophisticated reading skills - making inferences, offering a personal response to the text, following chronology etc...

Writing, for its part, continues to be the most challenging skill for most of our pupils. Even the basic sentence writing task highlighted the difficulties candidates often have with writing – the influence of French/KM syntax; inability to produce negative and interrogative structures properly; difficulties with sentence separation etc...Writing compositions creatively, using a rich and varied vocabulary, in grammatically accurate English and showing an ability to use a variety of sentence types, continues to be the hallmark of the very best candidates only.

Specific Comments

Question 1 (Basic Reading)

Question 1 assesses reading comprehension ability at a basic level. In this year's session, items assessed involved basic jargon used in daily life. Considering the complexity of the reading process, such items can be considered a suitable instrument for judging candidates' command of reading, albeit, at an elementary level.

The best done items were:

- Item (ii) Let's go to the cinema tonight. We can watch the film "Tarzan".
- Item (iii) We have a new teacher at school. I really enjoy her classes.
- Item (vi) You look very tired. You should have a rest.

The following items were found challenging by a small number of candidates:

- Item (iv) It has stopped raining. We can now go outside to play football.
- Item (v) Have you got Mary's phone number? I must talk to her urgently

Question 2

Question 2 tests a range of grammatical structures through multiple-choice items. The grammatical items assessed were pronouns (personal, reflexive and wh-pronouns), the use of tenses (simple present and simple past), prepositions, quantifiers, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and tag questions. The best done items were those dealing with personal and reflexive pronouns, comparative adjectives, wh-pronouns, prepositions which are commonly used and quantifiers. Candidates had greater difficulty with items testing tag questions and correct verb form with the use of do-support.

The best done items were:

- Item 1 Rita is a hardworking girl. She always does very well at school.
- Item 4 Please give me some water. I am very thirsty.
- Item 5 Sam is taller than his sister.
- Item 6 When they went camping, the children did all the work themselves.
- Item 7 'Who wants a piece of cake?' asked mother.
- Item 8 Tell me at what time the match will start.

The following items were found challenging by a significant number of candidates:

- Item 2 Last Sunday, my father took us to the seaside.

This item tested candidates' ability to deal with irregular verbs. Many candidates wrongly gave *take* as an answer.

Item 3 He kept his motorcycle against the wall.

Making correct use of prepositions in structures which are not frequently used remains a challenge. A common wrong answer here was *to*.

Item 9 You were surprised by the results, weren't you?

A common wrong answer was *didn't you* which suggests that candidates did not read the question carefully enough and were misled by the strong distractor which was in the past tense as well.

Item 10 Mother does not like oily food.

Using structures with the do-support correctly continues to be a problem, although this has been highlighted regularly in previous reports. Many candidates gave *likes* as an answer, simply relying on the subject-verb agreement principle and taking into consideration the first tense.

Question 3A

The basic aim of this question was to assess candidates' knowledge of common vocabulary.

The best done items were:

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Item (i) | You drink water from it. | <u>glass</u> or <u>gourd</u> |
| Item (ii) | You sleep in it. | <u>bed</u> |
| Item (iii) | It tells you the time. | <u>clock</u> |

Candidates had greater difficulty with the following items:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Item (iv) | Food is cooked there. | <u>kitchen</u> |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------|

Kitchen is a commonly misspelled word among young learners due to their inability to translate the pronunciation of the word into a spelling.

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Item (v) | You go there when you are ill. | <u>hospital</u> |
|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------|

Many candidates confused spelling of the English word with that of French.

Question 3B

The purpose of this question was to assess candidates' ability to deal with vocabulary in context through multiple choice items.

Candidates fared well in the following items:

- Item 3 Anil took some beautiful photos of me at the beach.
- Item 4 The children are all laughing. They look very happy.
- Item 5 John meets his friends at the bus stop every day.

The following items proved to be problematic for a few candidates:

- Item 1 My brother taught me how to tie my shoelaces.
- The word *learned* which is used interchangeably proved to be highly confusing for candidates.
- Item 2 I can't see properly. I need to put on my glasses.
- Many candidates wrongly answered *shoes* possibly due to an excessive familiarity with the word.

Question 4A

Question 4A assesses reading comprehension at an intermediate level, in particular the ability to locate information. This year, a factual text on 'The Eiffel Tower' was set and on the whole, performance was encouraging, with most candidates showing that the fundamental reading skill of literal understanding had been acquired.

While most candidates performed well, few who resorted to indiscriminate lifting were penalised. In this kind of task, the importance of brief and accurate answers cannot be over-emphasised.

Most items were generally well answered by candidates. The following items were less well done:

- Item 3 *Time taken to build it*
- The expected answer here was two years. Some candidates wrongly gave *31 March 1889* as the answer which was in fact the date of official inauguration. Others lost marks by the indiscriminate lifting of the sentence *It took two years to build this impressive monument which was officially inaugurated on 31 March 1889*.
- Item 5 *Material it is made of*
- Iron/Entirely of iron/Metal were awarded marks. Many wrongly answered The Iron Lady and hence, lost marks.
- Item 6 *Another name for the monument*

The expected answer was *'The Iron Lady'*. Many candidates lost marks by answering *Eiffel Tower*.

Item 9 *One way it has been used*

While those who answered *for scientific experiments/for experiments measuring the speed of wind/for experiments measuring the speed at which things fall/to attract visitors* were awarded marks, candidates who gave as answer *measuring the speed/ scientific/ speed of wind* alone were penalised.

Question 4B

The main purpose of this Extended Reading Comprehension task is to assess comprehension skills in a more varied way and at different levels.

This year, the text was an adapted narrative passage from Pedro Pablo Sacristan's Charlie and the Horse. A range of reading comprehension skills were assessed through:

Question 1 True or False Items

Question 2-5 MCQs

Question 6 Open-ended item

Question 7 Inference item

Question 8 Following the sequence of events item.

On the whole, given the format of the question paper which caters to students of all abilities, candidates could score marks throughout. However, questions requiring the ability to make inferences and read between the lines proved to be problematic for some candidates.

Candidates struggled with the following items:

Item 1 (iii) *Charlie's parents threw away his toys.*

The expected answer here was *False*, which candidates should have got from an understanding of the line *When he was bored with a toy, he would just throw it away*. Many candidates had difficulty following the idea that his parents gave him whatever he wanted and he would throw away his toy when he would get bored.

Item 3 *Charlie did not take care of his toys because he had too many toys.*

Option D- the toys were not interesting proved to be a strong distractor.

Item 6 *Mention two ways in which Charlie treated his horse differently from the way the girl treated her horse.*

The expected answers were:

-He did not treat his horse with love and affection.

-He beat the horse.

-He did not feed it well.

-He did not give it water (to drink).

-He did not brush it carefully.

The lift *'However, he treated his horse just as badly as all his toys'* was also given credit.

Many candidates who provided a complete verbatim lift *The first thing which she told him was to treat his horse with love and affection and never to use a whip to hit it or*

The next thing was to take care of it by feeding it well, giving it water to drink and brushing it carefully put themselves at an undue disadvantage.

Item 7 *Circle two adjectives from the list below which best describe Charlie's character before he met the girl.*

The expected answers were *unkind* and *selfish*.

Many candidates circled only one or three adjectives, resulting in loss of marks.

Item 8 This item demanded the skill of following the sequence of events and an overall understanding of the text which was found to be difficult by many candidates.

Question 5 (Basic Sentence Writing)

This question evaluated candidates' knowledge of and ability to apply the syntactic rules in English. Various tasks were set, ranging from removing surplus words from a sentence to actually writing a sentence using given words, and this gave candidates the opportunity to show to what extent they had mastered the rules of sentence construction in English.

Although Question 5 was considered to be the basic writing task in the assessment paper, it was relatively rare to see candidates scoring top marks. In particular, it was obvious that when it comes to syntax, somewhat predictably, the influence of French and of Kreol Morisien is still very visible. This was seen in the items assessing whether candidates could position adjectives (item iv) or adverbs (item v) correctly. For candidates from the lower ability groups, sentence separation (item iii) continues to be a major problem. As noted in

previous examination reports, the ability to transform sentences into the interrogative form correctly is also a major challenge, even for candidates who scored highly on the paper as a whole.

In sum, Question 5 highlighted that there are various areas of English syntax which have not been properly mastered by a good number of our pupils, and that there would be value in paying closer attention to this aspect of English learning in the classroom.

Item (i) *The car is in on the garage.*

Candidates were expected to show knowledge of the fact that a surplus word in a sentence disrupts the syntax and impacts on its meaning. The surplus word in this instance was *on* and a satisfactory number of candidates was able to do this item correctly.

Item (ii) *take – every – I – bus – the – day – at – eight*

This task asked candidates to rearrange the smallest constituent units of a sentence in the correct order to make a syntactically correct and meaningful sentence. A few options were acceptable here: *I take the bus every day at eight; I take the bus at eight every day; At eight I take the bus every day* (the different options illustrate the fact that adverbial phrases can move quite freely within a sentence). On the whole, this item was satisfactorily attempted by an important number of candidates.

Item (iii) *the children are working their teacher is happy*

In this task, candidates were asked to add capital letters and full stops where required. Although a very basic task, only about half of the candidates managed to do this correctly. This item is in fact deceptively simple, and actually tests candidates' knowledge of what a sentence is and how sentences should be separated – a skill which is not mastered by the great majority of candidates. Many candidates had difficulty knowing where to separate the sentences and often omitted the full stop between the two sentences.

The rule that has to be mastered here is that each sentence contains at least a finite verb, and if there is more than one finite verb, then there is more than one sentence.

Item (iv) *The dress which Alice is wearing is beautiful (white)*

This task assessed candidates' ability to position adjectives correctly within a sentence. There is an important difference between English and French when it comes to the positioning of adjectives [For

example, contrast *The White house* (where the adjective is positioned before the noun) to *La Maison Blanche* (where the adjective is positioned after the noun). Kreol Morisien behaves more like French in that respect as well (*lakaz blan* and not **blan lakaz*).

It was therefore not entirely surprising to see that a rather significant number of candidates gave answers like **The dress white which Alice is wearing is beautiful* instead of *The white dress which Alice is wearing is beautiful*. This suggests that the contrast between English and French and KM when it comes to the positioning of adjectives deserves to be explicitly taught so that the attention of candidates is drawn on the important syntactic differences between the different languages they are learning simultaneously.

Item (v) **She puts quickly the letter in the envelope*

In this task, candidates were expected to show that they recognised that the adverb was wrongly placed and they were then expected to move it to a syntactically acceptable position in the sentence. Just as for item (iv), the difficulty arose because of the different syntactic rules between English and French.

As noted in previous examiners' reports, adverbs are relatively free to move within a sentence in English. For example, it is perfectly acceptable to say *Quickly, she puts the letter in the envelope*; *She puts the letter in the envelope quickly*; *She puts the letter quickly in the envelope* and even *She quickly puts the letter in the envelope*.

The one exception though is that in English, contrary to French, adverbs cannot be positioned between a verb and its direct object. While it is perfectly correct to say *Elle met rapidement la lettre dans l'enveloppe* in French, the same does not apply to English.

Given the above, it was somewhat not surprising to note that an important number of candidates had difficulty in positioning the adverb correctly. This again suggests that this important syntactic difference should be explicitly taught so that the attention of pupils is drawn to the fact that French and English behave differently when it comes to sentence construction.

Item (vi) *John broke this chair*

In item (vi), candidates had to transform the given sentence into the interrogative form. The expected answer was *Did John break this chair?*

It was particularly noteworthy that only about a third of the candidates managed to do this item correctly. Even high-performing candidates struggled to score full marks on this item, which shows that forming

interrogative sentences in English is an area that requires more work in the classroom.

A number of difficulties were encountered here. Many candidates were wholly unfamiliar with the syntax of interrogative structures, producing answers like **Broke John this chair?* Others had difficulty coming up with the correct verb form and gave answers like **Did John broke this chair?* A noticeable number of candidates also used the wrong modal verb **Can John break this chair?*

Turning declarative sentences into interrogative sentences can be a challenge in English, and it is important that this aspect of English syntax is given due importance in the classroom.

Item (vii) *ill – absent – school*

For item (vii), candidates were asked to write a sentence with the given words. Examiners gave full credit to sentences which were syntactically correct, grammatically accurate and which were meaningful.

A particular challenge with this task was that candidates had to use coordinating conjunctions very often to be able to use all the given words in a single sentence: *Because I was ill, I was absent from school; As I was ill I was absent from school.* Quite an important number of candidates had difficulty doing so, offering sentences like **I am ill, I am absent from school.* This again betrays an ignorance of what a sentence is, as noted in the comments for item (iii) and also highlights a general difficulty for many candidates to write complex sentences.

It was also noteworthy that many candidates had difficulty with finding the right preposition, often saying **absent at school* rather than *absent from school.*

Question 6A & 6B

This question is a higher order reading task which assesses candidates' reading strategies and both receptive and productive vocabulary.

This year, the task was based on the familiar idea of spending holidays at a relative's who lives near the sea.

In Part A, words had been given from which candidates had to choose the appropriate word to complete the text. Candidates performed satisfactorily on this part of the question.

As for Part B, several candidates struggled to find the missing words. Many did not have the required vocabulary to provide plausible answers to the gaps provided. Others provided answers which did not do justice to the overall context of the passage.

Question 6B

Item 1

I have never/not been to Tamarin before.

This item was found to be difficult. An adverb of time/frequency was required here and acceptable answers included: *twice/thrice/often/once/already*.

Item 2

My aunt has told/informed me that the sunset there is very beautiful.

More answers which were given credit were, inter alia, *showed, promised, assured*. Some candidates were penalised by using the present tense when a past participle was required.

Common wrong answers were *said, talked, remember, invited* which did not fit in the structure.

Item 3

There are also lots of seashells on the beach(es)/sand/seaside.

Candidates had to draw on their world knowledge to provide a plausible answer.

Frequent wrong answers included: *sunsets, wall(s), sky* which were unreasonable.

Item 4

If you go out in a boat/ship, you can see dolphins jumping out of the water.

A number of options was acceptable here: *catamaran/canoe/pirogue/submarine/kayak* or even words indicating time (such as *week/month/fortnight*) were allotted marks.

On the whole, this item was satisfactorily done.

Item 5

*At the mouth of river Tamarin, you can also catch small *fish/creatures*.*

A wide array of words related to marine life was accepted (such as *crabs, shrimps, tilapia, turtles, starfish*).

Common wrong answers included: *bungalows, flowers, shoes, car, waves* which did not fit in.

Question 7A (Grammar and Spelling in Context)

Question 7 A assessed candidates' ability to deal with grammar and spelling in context. It is a higher order task, and as such, posed difficulty to an important number of candidates.

A short text containing grammatical and spelling mistakes was set. The mistakes were already identified (though underlining) and candidates were required to correct them.

Item 1 *Put to boil in a saucepen...*

This item assessed the knowledge of the spelling of the word *saucepan*. Although a relatively common word in English, the majority of candidates had trouble finding the correct spelling. This highlights another common difficulty for many candidates – familiarity with common vocabulary items.

Item 2 *When the syrup become thick...*

This item tested whether candidates would be able to identify which tense is required in the given context and what would be the correct verb form for this tense. Various options were acceptable: *becomes*, *has become* and even *is becoming*.

This was the worse done item in the question, with many candidates failing to realise which tense was required here. Many wrongly gave **became* as an answer here, without paying due attention to the fact that the simple past tense did not fit in with the overall context of the given passage.

Item 3 *...take out the pieces of papaya and put it to dry in the sun*

This item tested whether candidates realised that the plural pronoun *them* was required rather than the singular pronoun *it*. To be able to do so, they had to read the text carefully to know that it was the noun phrase *pieces of papaya* that was being referred to.

Only about a third of candidates managed to do so, suggesting that many candidates do not master the fact that pronouns carry grammatical information (gender and number). Reading comprehension passages provide plenty of opportunities for Educators to bring this fact to pupils.

Item 4 *Put in a box which have a tight lid...*

Item 4 assessed knowledge of subject-verb agreement, a basic but essential rule of English grammar. Since the subject *box* is singular in this case, the verb form has to be *has* and not *have*. On the whole, this was satisfactorily attempted.

Item 5 *...and kept in a dry place.*

The imperative form of the verb *to keep* was required for item 5 and it was the best done item for this question.

Question 7B (Word Formation)

Question 7B assessed word formation in context. A short passage was set, with words needing transformation given in brackets. In general, with the exception of item 4, performance on this question was satisfactory, which suggests that the common word formation rules have been acquired by a big proportion of pupils.

Item 1 *On television, there are many programmes for children*

This item tested the transformation of the singular noun *child* into the plural *children*. This is a very common transformation and was well attempted by the majority of candidates, although some spoiled their answers by over-correcting and giving **childrens* as an answer.

Item 2 *Cartoons can be fun/funny or dramatic.*

The transformation of *fun* to *funny* was expected here, although *fun* was also an acceptable answer. This item did not really pose difficulty to candidates but some struggled with the spelling of *funny*, offering options like **funy* or **funi*.

Item 3 *One very interesting cartoon is “Finding Nemo”...*

For item 3, candidates were required to transform the noun *interest* into the adjective *interesting*. This is also a common transformation in English and did not pose difficulty to the majority of candidates. Some candidates unexpectedly gave *uninteresting* as an answer, and given that this is an acceptable transformation in English, it was also given credit.

Item 4 *It is the story of a fish whose son is captured.*

The past participle form of the verb *to capture* was required here. Although an important number of candidates managed to give the correct verb form, it is worth pointing out that this was the item that posed the most difficulty in Question 7B. Participle forms, whether present or past, still pose difficulty to an important number of pupils, and Educators would be well advised to give due attention to this aspect of word formation in their teaching.

Item 5 *...and overcomes many dangerous situations.*

In item 5, the transformation of the noun *danger* into the adjective *dangerous* was required. This was also well done on the whole, although some candidates offered **dangereux* as an answer, again showing the potential for language interference to occur.

Question 8A (Writing a short text using given cohesive devices)

Question 8A, which was an entirely new task in the assessment, assessed the ability of candidates to write a short, coherent text, while using simple cohesive devices or coordinating conjunctions. Three pictures were given, with a set of words next to each picture. Candidates were required to use the given words to write a sentence on each picture, while ensuring that the three sentences made up coherent short story.

It is worth pointing out that candidates seemed generally unprepared to cope with the demands of this task. The following issues were noted:

- Some candidates did not seem to realise that the given words had to be used, and wrote random sentences on the given pictures.
- Others did not pay attention to the pictures at all and wrote random sentences with the given words.
- Most importantly, many candidates wrote independent sentences on each picture, not paying attention to the fact that the three sentences had to make up a coherent short story.

It is important that Educators and candidates alike are reminded that the purpose of this task is to write a coherent short story, and not to write individual sentences. They should do so by giving due consideration to the given pictures and the words provided.

Item 1 *One morning – bicycle*

This was the best done item in Question 8A, with simple sentences like *One morning, John went out to ride his bicycle* being perfectly acceptable. Nevertheless, some difficulties were encountered with grammar and syntax. The influence of KM syntax was sometimes seen, with sentences like **he was riding bicycle* being rather frequent. The use of prepositions also posed problem to some candidates here, with sentences like **he was riding his bicycle in the road* being seen.

Item 2 *Suddenly – rock*

This item posed some difficulty to candidates, with many struggling to find the right vocabulary and others failing to find correct prepositions to write correct sentences. Again, the influence of KM was felt, with some candidates offering sentences like **he beat with a rock* or **he tapped with a rock* instead of *He hit against a rock*.

Item 3 *finally – leg*

The given words invited a complex sentence of the type *Finally, he ended up in hospital with a broken leg*. Many candidates had difficulty with syntax and

vocabulary again here, with sentences like **Finally, his one leg was broken* instead of *Finally one of his legs was broken*; or **finally, he went to hospital because his leg was cased*.

Question 8B (Using link words to combine sentences)

Question 8B assessed candidates' ability to use link words to combine sentences. The different sentences make up a short paragraph. Just like with Question 8A, the performance of candidates on this task suggests that the skill of writing complex sentences using cohesive devices (such as linking words) continues to be challenging.

Candidates are reminded that for this task, examiners are looking for the correct use of the link word, along with all other transformations that might be required within the sentence (punctuation, verb forms etc...)

Item 1 *They were driving towards Port Louis. They had an accident. (while)*

The expected answer here was *While they were driving towards Port Louis they had an accident*. Some candidates lost marks by inserting *while* in the wrong place, giving sentences like **While they had an accident, they were driving towards Port Louis*. This sentence was clearly meaningless, and could not be given any credit. Other candidates lost marks by not making the necessary changes in the sentence, offering options like **While they were driving towards Port Louis. They had an accident*. Little credit can be given to such answers.

Item 2 *A car was coming behind them. The car hit their car. (which)*

The expected answer for item 2 was *A car which was coming behind them hit their car*, although credit was also given to *The car which hit their car had been coming/came from behind them*. This item proved to be the most difficult for candidates in this question. Wrong answers like **A car was coming behind them which hit their car*; **A car was coming behind them which the car hit them* were relatively common.

Item 3 *The cars were damaged. Nobody was hurt. (although)*

This item was generally well done, with both *Although the cars were damaged nobody was hurt* and *Although nobody was hurt the cars were damaged* being acceptable propositions. Although could also be positioned in the middle of the two propositions, with answers like *The cars were damaged although nobody was hurt* and *Nobody was hurt although the cars were damaged* being correct answers.

Item 4 *The children were disappointed. They were going to miss the races. (because)*

Using *because* to link these two sentences proved to be relatively straightforward to the majority of candidates, who correctly offered *The children were disappointed because they were going to miss the races*. Rare wrong answers were of the type **Because the children were disappointed they were going to miss the races*, which did not make sense in the given context.

Question 9 (Composition)

The revised composition task now asks candidates to write about 120 words (instead of 150 words) and counts for 10 marks (instead of 20). In addition, Educators have been advised to expect a variety of possible prompts that will trigger writing: pictures, canvas, or continuing a story after being given the opening lines.

It is important to point out from the outset that the decrease in mark allocation for this question does not mean that it is less important a skill than before. On the contrary, being able to write a continuous piece of prose in accurate English continues to be a vital skill that all children of primary school age should be able to master if they are to continue their secondary schooling successfully. As such, Educators are expected to give it the same importance as they used to when the composition was marked over 20 marks.

Educators are reminded that examiners will be looking at the following criteria when assessing compositions:

- The ability to be creative and develop a storyline
- Use rich, appropriate and a varied vocabulary
- Be accurate and precise in the use of Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation
- Use varied sentence structures to convey meaning

In this year's session, candidates were given the opening lines and asked to continue the story: *I was at the market with my parents. All of a sudden, I saw a man grab an old lady's bag and run...*

Performance on this question was, on the whole, slightly disappointing. Many pieces of writing, even by those from the higher ability groups, lacked ambition and they seemed content with writing the minimum required. In addition, the use of varied and rich vocabulary, within an elaborate storyline using accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation, with a variety of sentence structures on display was the hallmark of the very best candidates only.

The linguistic challenges that remain are:

- The coherence of tenses (mixing present and past tense inappropriately)
- Subject-verb agreement
- Punctuating direct speech correctly

- L1/French interference in syntax

The following sample of essays illustrates the range of answers obtained this year. They are provided to give Educators an idea of standards and of examiners' expectations. Each composition is provided with comments to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the writing.

Composition 1

One Saturday morning the sun was brightly shine in the sky I were in the market and my parent. Finally I saw a man grab an old lady's bag and run. I decided to said my parents my parents decided to call the police I run away the thief I grab the old man bag and finally the police arrives he thief go to the prison I return the old lady's bag and the woman said me Thank you children.

This composition is relevant, with some attempt at developing the storyline. However, there are numerous linguistic weaknesses in this piece of writing. Sentence separation is particularly flawed, with hardly any punctuation at all. There are countless grammatical mistakes with verbs wrongly conjugated most of the time. The linguistic weaknesses mean that this composition can only score very low marks.

Composition 2

I was at the market with my parents. All of a sudden a man grab an old lady's bag and run as I were courgeous I ran after him without letting him know anything. I were like a Ninja. Everybody was starring at me as I were humillided I return with my parents with sadness on my face. I said to myself that never I will people borrowe people. The next day I saw the same man borrowing this old lady. The man run as fast as he could. Per chance my parents bought me a new bicycle. I took my black and white bicycle and started purchasing him. At the end I got the man my parent call the policeman and I gave the old her bag and she gave me two hundred rupees.

This composition is relevant and deserves credit for its attempt to develop a storyline creatively. However, on all other linguistic aspects, it is problematic. The vocabulary is elementary and often inaccurate (**I will never let people borrowe people* instead of *bother*; **I started purchasing him* instead of *chasing him*). The spelling is often poor (**courgeous*, *humillided*). In grammar, the incoherence of tenses is glaring, as is the absence of proper sentence separation in syntax. All in all, while deserving some marks for being relevant and

for attempting to build a story, this composition scores very low marks for being too insecure with the use of language.

Composition 3

I was at the market with my parents. All of a sudden I saw a man grab an old lady's bag and run as fast as he could. The old lady screamed for help. I took my phone and I called the police station. "The phone is occupied," said the voice in the phone. After a few minutes, I called the police station again. The police came and caught the man. The old lady was in the seventh heaven of delight.

Although quite short in length, this composition manages to get a mid-range score. The story is complete, with enough relevant details. Grammar, spelling and punctuation are secure on the whole (with the glaring exception of **caught*). The vocabulary is adequate, with only one obvious error (**The phone is occupied*). However, this composition does not score higher because there has not been an attempt by this candidate to produce a more elaborate story. The content is simple, just like the language used is accurate but not sophisticated. Due to the lack of ambition, this composition can only stay in the mid-table range, although the potential to score higher was present.

Composition 4

I was at the market with my parents. All of a sudden I saw a man grab an old lady's bag and run as fast as he could. I told my parents that a man had grab a all women. While I was running after the man, my father was telling the ancident to the police. After some minutes, two car full of policemen was outside. He was falling down all the articles. Suddenly he fell down and I took the bag and returned it to the old lady. The police station and the all the persons in the market applauded me. Finally the man went to the prison and my family and I helped the persons who worked in the market to clean it.

Composition 4 is also a mid-range composition. Just like Composition 3, there is some development of the storyline, but not much in terms of elaboration. The language used is probably more insecure than in composition 3, but not insecure enough to be called clumsy throughout. There are some grammatical mistakes (**tow car, had grab*) and in some parts meaning is blurred (**He was falling down all the articles*). On the whole though, the work is clear enough, with enough development of the storyline, written in fairly decent English, but does not deserve better than a mid-range mark.

Composition 5

I was at the market with my parents. All of a sudden I saw a man grab an old lady's bag and run as fast as he could. On seeing that, my father started running after the burglar followed by two policemen. After some seconds, my father tripped up the thief who fell full length on the asphalted road. The police arrested the thief. Needless to say that me and my mother were frozen with fear. My father returned the bag to the lady. The latter invited my family for dinner as reward for the act of bravery that my father had done. The following day, I heard by the radio that the thief has been put behind bars. This event is still vivid in my mind as if it was yesterday. "Good actions are always rewarded". Do you agree with me?

Composition 5 scores very highly. From the outset, it is obvious that the storyline has been elaborately developed, with the candidate bringing a lot of details to the story. What is particularly impressive with this piece of work is the richness of the vocabulary (*tripped the thief; frozen with fear, put behind bars etc...*). There is also a striking variety of sentence types, including some very sophisticated constructions (*fell full length on the asphalted road; The latter invited my family for dinner as reward for the act of bravery that my father had done*). There are a couple of minor grammatical issues (**me and my mother; I heard by the radio*), but they are negligible. This is clearly a candidate who can write very accurate and sophisticated English with ease, and as such deserves a very high mark.

Composition 6

I was at the market with my parents. All of a sudden I saw a man grab an old lady's bag and running away. The man pushed the lady. The old lady fell down and was crying for help in a high-pitched voice. Me, who witnessed what had happened, started chasing the man. The man was running as fast as his legs would carry him. As the market was very crowded, it was very difficult for the man to escape. Suddenly, a marvelous idea flashed into my mind. As fast as lightning, I went to hide near crates of vegetables. Once the man arrived near the crates, I pushed him with full force and he fell heavily on the ground. In the meantime, the police also arrived at the spot. Finally the man was arrested and was sentenced for two months of imprisonment and a fine to pay. The old lady thanked me. At last, I was as happy as a lark. My parents felt very proud of me.

This composition also scores very highly, for very much the same reasons that Composition 5 did. It has an elaborate storyline with plenty of details, has rich and varied vocabulary (*crying in a high-pitched voice; witnessed what had happened; running as fast as his legs would carry him*). There is also an interesting variety of sentence types, all written in very accurate English. All these ingredients combine to produce a high quality piece of work which deserves very high marks.