

Aga Khan University Examination Board

Notes from E-Marking Centre on SSC Part II English Examination May 2014

Introduction

This document has been produced for the teachers and candidates of SSC Part II course in English. It contains comments on candidate responses to the 2014 Secondary School Certificate examination, indicating the quality of the responses and highlighting their relative strengths and weaknesses.

General Comments

This report includes overall comments on students' performance on every question and *some* specific examples of students' responses which support the mentioned comments. Please note that the descriptive comments represent an overall perception of the better and weaker responses as gathered from the e-marking session. Whereas, the candidates' responses shared (where deemed necessary) in this document represent some specific example(s) of the mentioned comments.

Paper II of SSC II English Compulsory comprised of three questions. Question 1 contains four sub-parts i.e. constructed response questions based on a reading passage. The areas assessed in this section are literal and inferential understanding and reasoning skills. Question no.2 and Question no.3 are the extended response questions i.e. letter writing and essay writing respectively. The areas assessed in the writing section are content relevance, language accuracy, coherence within sentences and paragraphs and structure / format of letter and essay.

Teachers and candidates should be aware that examiners may ask questions that address the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in a manner that requires candidates to respond by integrating knowledge, understanding and application skills they have developed by studying the course.

Candidates also need to know that the marks allocated to the question and the answer space (which is provided on the examination paper), are a guide to the length of the required response. A longer response will not in itself lead to higher marks. Writing far beyond the indicated space may reduce the time available for answering other questions.

Candidates need to be familiar with the Command Words which contains some terms commonly used in examination questions. However, candidates should also be aware that not all questions will start with, or contain, any key word from the glossary. Questions such as 'how?', 'why?' or 'to what extent?' may be asked, and verbs which are not included in the list may be used, such as 'elaborate', 'analyze' or 'state'.

Detailed Comments:

Question 1

It is a constructed response question. Candidates are required to understand the reading passage and accordingly answer the questions asked on various aspects of the passage. The reading passage was an extract from the autobiography of the famous political figure Nelson Mandela. There were five questions asked in parts a, b, c and d.

Part a:

Better responses reflected a thorough understanding of the textual evidences which describe Mandela's personality. Such candidates mentioned different aspects like 'active', 'sporty', 'humble' and 'keen learner' and supported each of the adjectival phrases with an evidence. However, many candidates had no clue of how to extract evidences from a text that support a specific feature like personality traits. Even in better responses, it was observed that candidates were unconcerned about the accuracy and mechanics of language. One such response can be seen below.

Example:

- 1) A boy who remained at home tied to his mother's apron string is called a "sissy".
- 2) Stick-fight is essential for rural-African boys.
- 3) Africans have a highly developed sense of dignity.
- 4) In Africa Blacks & Whites are treated in different ways.
- 5) Africans meant to learn from imitations & emulations.
- 6) The men and women followed the path laid for them by their fathers & mothers respectively.

Weaker responses indicated that candidates did not focus on the question or did not read the passage closely. Weaker responses also revealed the lack of close reading and overall inferior general knowledge of the candidates as a few candidates mentioned that 'Nelson Mandela was a girl / queen of Africa.' The passage clearly indicated the gender of Nelson Mandela i.e. he commented that he and other boys used to play in fields all day long and a boy who was not interested in playing was called a 'sissy.' Teachers have to make students go through drills to identify simple details through textual clues. Some students erroneously mentioned that Nelson Mandela was a Muslim; nowhere in the passage was such an indication given. Teachers should instruct their students to read and annotate the passage closely so that they can refer and reword the textual details only; this will minimize the chances of error.

Example:

He spent most of his free time in the field playing and fighting with other boys of the village. He did many things like looking after sheeps and calves in the field. He use to play with toys that made by himself.

Part b:

In better responses, candidates correctly identified that the narrator was unseated by an unruly donkey and 'lost face' amongst his friends. They also co-related this incident with the highly elevated sense of ego which according to the narrator is a characteristic of the African culture. They elaborated the lesson of care and humility the narrator learnt from that experience.

Many candidates were not able to understand the question. In some cases, it was identified that the word 'self-esteem' was unfamiliar to the candidates and hence they got confused. Teachers should try to have some vocabulary drills to enrich students' vocabulary through the help of contextual clues. In this case, the second part of the question i.e. 'what lesson did he learn..' may have served as a clue to locate the answer in the passage where the narrator said 'I learnt my lesson from an unruly donkey...'

Example:

The unruly donkey gives ~~me~~ narrator self-esteem a blow. They had been taking turns climbing up, which when narrator chance came he jumped on and the donkey bolted into a nearby thornbush. It bend its head and unseat him, which he did, but not before the thorn had pricked and scratched his faced, embarrassing him in front of his friends. Narrator learns that to humiliate another person is to make him suffer an unnecessarily cruel fate.

In weaker responses, candidates mentioned irrelevant details: some mentioned that the narrator enjoyed playing in fields and that he learnt through observations. They should have been able to understand the question by contextual clues even if the question contained an unfamiliar word.

Example:

he learned his lesson one day from a donkey. he learned that to humilate another person is to make him suffer an unnecessarily cruel fate.

Part c:

In better responses, candidates were able to locate five specific features of the African society. There was no repetition of points, each point pointed out a social or traditional feature of the African society.

Example:

- 1) A boy who remained at home tied to his mother's apron string is called a "sissy".
- 2) Stick-fight is essential for rural-African boys.
- 3) Africans have a highly developed sense of dignity.
- 4) In Africa Blacks & Whites are treated in different ways.
- 5) Africans meant to learn from imitations & emulations.
- 6) The men and women followed the path laid for them by their fathers & mothers respectively.

In weaker responses, candidates were able to include two or three features of African society correctly. Some responses reflected comments irrelevant to the text, like 'African society is primarily Muslim', 'Africans are usually tall and black'. Teachers should specify during class work that candidates have to locate for relevant information from the passage unless the question specifically demands them to use their schema.

Example:

- They made the toys by themselves.
- Ox-drawn sleighs out of tree branches.
- The hills above Qunu were dotted with large smooth rocks.
- Flat stones and slid down the face of the large rocks.

Part d:

In better responses, candidates mentioned the habit of white people which surprised Mandela i.e. children asking many questions and parents' answering them. They also stated an opinion about the habit, most of them appreciated that habit and gave a reason for it.

Example:

He was often dumbfounded by the number and nature of questions that children asked for of their parents and their parents, unfailing willingness to answer them.

The habit of asking questions is not a bad habit. If we have a confusion about something, we must ask questions and just clear it out!

Weaker responses mentioned that white people mistreated black people; similarly they made irrelevant comments about the social dynamics of Africa. Teachers should focus on various reading drills like skimming and scanning to locate specific information within a passage. Teachers should also encourage students to formulate their own opinions substantiated by reasons.

Example:

Mandela was surprised because of their behaviours.

children's were having number of question but parents were not willing to attend answer them. The questions were considered as nuisance. The adults were only giving them information which was coming from their fear father. Only

Question 2

In this question, candidates were encouraged to use their thinking and language skills and assuming a situation, they were supposed to write formal letters or reports showing their insight and understanding of the stimuli. Some examples have been cited to forge an understanding of the difference between better and weaker responses.

Part a:

In better responses for Question 2 a, the candidates:

- showed an understanding of the difference between a report and a letter;
- named either a genre or mentioned movies by name to indicate what types of movies need to be seen. The various benefits of doing so were also elaborated.
- used appropriate format of a letter (mostly block format with open punctuation);
- used appropriate tenses and vocabulary.
- used appropriate punctuation marks.

In weaker responses for Question 2a, the candidates:

- mentioned details about documentaries (irrelevant) and debates that in their opinion should be shown in school's limited time.
- did not display language accuracy;
- displayed more than three errors of spelling.

Example:

Option (a).

Examination Hall,
Nassa School,
Korangi, Karachi,
Date: 17, May, 2014.

Respected Madam, Principles,

I am writing this letter to the principle of Nassa Secondary School and request to arrange a watching movie in a particular day for a few hours, because the watching movie in school has many benefits, mostly educational benefits because the friends are together watching educational movie they have an idea and discussion about the movies for instint educational movie like, History of Pakistan is the most interesting and Conceptual movie for the Students. In this movie Students have more knowledge to get and discuss about the history of Pakistan and movies has mainly both types like Romantic, horror, funny, Conceptual, interesting and more

other types of movie. So students have beneficially educational movie, horror movie, conceptual movie in the school. All students demand and request to the principle please arrange the watching movie. Name of the movies like History of Pakistan type of educational movie and Heri pottes kind of horror movie. This movie have horror but interesting for the students. The moral of the movie for the students. Like those students have no parents so these students have independently solve all problems and every step of life and one advantage for the watching in school all friends meet and get together in the school. This moment lovable and enjoyment moment of life in school. So I will be very thankful to you accept my letter and accept the request of watching movie in school.

Part b:

The prompt required the candidates to write a report on suspicious activities in their neighborhood. In better responses the candidates:

- mentioned various suspicious activities and how they are causing discomfort to the residents. Some mentioned the source of findings by narrating an investigation.
- mentioned at least two suggestions on how this issue could be tackled.
- used correct format of a report which includes subject of the report, sources of information, findings and suggestions;
- organized the information in paragraphs;
- use modal verbs to give suggestions
- used appropriate tenses and vocabulary;

- used appropriate punctuation marks.

In weaker responses for Question 2 b, the candidates:

- elaborated the general lack of safety and lack of law and order situation in the city.
- were not able to detail the course of action or the suggestions
- did not use appropriate tenses or language structures.
- had many errors of spelling.

Example:

Option B

To,
 ABC Police Station
 Karachi

Subject: some people are doing unligel
 activity, at our neighbours house.

Respected Sir,

I am resident of abc area
 I want to inform you that
 some people are live near at
 our home they were doing
 some unligal activity.
 They are unknown person not belonge
 to our area they have some gun
 and other unligel weapons and
 day they were came to our
 they said if any are complain
 about us they were kill the
 person. I was saw one day,
 they bring boom and other
 kind of thing in this area
 Sir we are not safe

have people were living
there home and going to other
area and there relative place
to day i'm writing this
complain to you because we
were already complain before
three and four time but no
one take action agaisit them
I dont know why.

I hope that you will take
action agaisit them stop
them from our area place
Sir because your the barive
police officer I saw you in
tv and arrested ~~an~~^{many} trasusim.

Your sincerely
Thanks you

Question 3

The candidates were directed to write an essay on any of the three choices given.

Part a:

The question required the candidates to evaluate the practice of beggary and present their views regarding beggars.

In better responses for Question 3a the candidates:

- used appropriate organization in the essay, information was divided into paragraphs;
- gave interesting and realistic description of the kinds of beggars around them and also mentioned which ones deserve our help and which ones do not.
- used clear and lucid language which was relevant to the prompt;
- used appropriate tenses and subject-verb agreement;
- used punctuation marks appropriately.

Example:

Option a.

Our religion Islam and the teachings of Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has emphasized on this word "Charity" means donating with money and ^{providing} basic needs of life to a person who is not financially or economically well set in his life, but to only those who are actually needy, people who are suffering from poverty, lack of basic commodities of life, who are unable to fulfill their needs. But nowadays in today's world especially in country ^{like} Pakistan where the problem of overpopulation is increasing and resources of life are decreasing criminal activities, anti-social activities, terrorism, begging are the growing issues. According to the analyst in the countries which are backward and are deprived of the resources the rate of begging is increasing 8-10% per year which is now a global issue (discussed by UNO (United Nations Organization)).

If we only take a sight or glance of any street of Karachi from a poor to a lavish area, all the streets are filled with beggars, pleading for money, asking for mercy and help, having babies in their hands, even the rate of gays in the societies has been increased rapidly. They find begging a source of income for their family as well as for their groups or tribes who are been trained from the first day they enter this world to beg and then eat. They don't even deserve it and in my opinion they should also not

In weaker responses for Question 3 a, the candidates:

- failed to supply specific information regarding the different types / kinds of beggars and thus ignored the aspect of which ones deserves our help.
- wrote incorrect language i.e. errors of spellings, tenses and run on sentences.

Example:

Option A

Our Holy prophet (PBUH) said. "Always
you have your eat chances. If you
are not able to have food or
any thing also begger to the God
not begging to the people"
Beggery is a curse. Begger
always shame in the front of
other peoples and lose the God
facilities. Begger are always in
the bad peoples company.
And about dirty habits and
his language come into
the dirt. Beggers are not able
to be a man because
he ~~was~~ will be make
a Wolf.
Beggery has many types
Some begger has related to
the sedative or Narcotics drugs.
Some enter in this region for
your help. Because they are not
able to perform any work and
They are dependency.

Some peoples are enter into Beggering
with out any problem and need.
our environment ~~his~~ full fill
to ~~that~~ that's types people.

Greed is a curse. Some
people are health healthy but Dull
or thief of work. These types people
are not able to Beggering.
Because these are healthy and
noticed food himself when beauty
was crying.

Some people are not
able to suggest your food. More
than ~~to~~ they are infection of hand
and legs or other part of body. This
infection are not work properly to
the patient. These people are able
to beggering.

Beggering ~~is~~ should be last
chance first chance will be Begg
to the God. God said "you Beg
me I love you"

Part b:

The prompt required the candidates to compare the Pakistani TV with foreign TV. Most of the candidates chose to opt for this part.

In better responses for question 3 b, the candidates:

- presented an account of comparison between the recent and old efforts of Pakistani directors / writers who create dramas with interesting themes.
- presented examples of good TV serials and elaborated how the mentioned serials are better in comparison with foreign drama serials.
- used cohesive markers for achieving coherence;
- organized the information in paragraphs with a clear introduction, body and conclusion;
- used appropriate tenses, subject-verb agreement;
- used punctuations where required.

Example:

Option (b).

"One of the positive aspects of Pakistan."

Since around a half-century ago, when televisions became popular and more appropriately common, dramas have ~~become~~ ^{been} a ~~major~~ major part of everyone's life. Changes in drama patterns and the various variety introduced, as well as the additions in the crew of drama industry ~~is~~ is noticed, well not only noticed, but also appreciated and ~~not~~ ~~criticised~~ criticised upon by the local audience. And it still goes on.

So yeah, when few years back, foreign ~~was~~ television serials were introduced in our channels, it faced much ~~criticism~~ criticism and naturally came as a competition to the ongoing ^{local} drama productions. But then, our drama industry gathered ^{themselves} ~~up~~ and ~~some~~ produced dramas that would not only beat but excel the standards of the foreign ones. And ~~it is~~ ^{they are} still doing that. ~~It has~~ ^{They have} been using the technique to shift the attention of audience ~~to them~~ towards themselves by producing dramas of ~~higher~~ ^{higher} or even higher quality. Reverse technique maybe? ^{they have} ~~it has~~ been successful in it to some extent. A very appreciable one I'd say. In a parallel but yet opposite way, I'd say that the entertainment ones, pure entertainment ones have kind of lost their quality. Comedy has become a major fail attempt. You know, dramas like Bulbulay (which once used to be good), Mango people etc. But the more serious ones, which people tend to love since they find it relatable,

have improved majorly in terms of quality. ~~Due to~~ And writers like Umera Ahmed, Farhat Ishtiaq, can be held ~~credible~~ creditable. Of course, the whole cast, directors and every single person counts too. So you see, from the past few years, the best dramas have been Daam, Humsafar, Dil-e-Muztar, Meri zaat zarr-a-e benishaan, Man-o-salwa, Maat and so many ~~more~~ more. It's been a tremendous achievement of the industry. The one I didn't mention is my all time favourite 'Dastan' which featured the ~~love~~ ^{life} of a man and a woman at the time of independence and later. Oh, it was a blockbuster. For me atleast.

Pakistani dramas are really a true representation of our culture. Unlike most foreign dramas, they go beyond the limitations of a love story. All kinds of social issues, society defects are shown in our dramas. Moreover, they are moral-based. And are written with a perspective that is VERY close to real life. And so, people find it relatable to the lives they are living and have lived and consequently, they tend to learn as to how to deal with particular problems that comes as common to both the person (audience) and the drama ~~chara~~ ^(fiction) character. This is what makes our dramas different. They are visual learning. Well, I and many people like me, have a passion for dramas. And I do have plans for being ~~such~~ a writer that gives the basis for such dramas.

In weaker responses for question 3c, the candidates:

- elaborated their favourite drama serials but failed to provide any point of comparison between Pakistani and foreign television.
- demonstrated lack of knowledge of sentence structures: tenses and subject-verb agreement;
- wrote many run on sentences without coherence.

Part c

This question required the students to describe their favourite 'rural sport'.

In better responses for question 3 c, the candidates:

- referred to a rural sport, elaborated why they like it and explained its rules.
- elaborated the feelings of excitement and happiness experienced when playing it
- used appropriate language structures: tenses and subject-verb agreement;
- used relevant vocabulary: adjectives or adverbs describing the situation;
- organized the information in paragraphs: however, the introduction was too long and out of proportion

In weaker responses for question 3 c, the candidates:

- mentioned the importance of sports (usually one point)
- mentioned an irrelevant sport like cricket, baseball or football (not rural). Such candidates lost marks on content.
- were unaware of appropriate language structures;
- made numerous spelling mistakes.

Example:

Option C.

Pakistan has a many rural games. And every year playing and different teams Pakistan has a large leather play rural game and Pakistan's other team Pakistan is the greater than other teams because rural game play in Pakistan that's why Pakistan is the greater than other Pakistan team. Pakistan playing a few matches and and he play group 2. Pakistan is the most popular in this game and in Pakistan mostly playing cricket. Pakistan love the cricket and he prepare to play cricket Pakistan is the most talented in our world because cricket is love in Pakistan and cricket most play in Pakistan every ground play cricket every child play cricket because cricket is most popular in Pakistan and Pakistan team is very changed in our team because Pakistan team play friendly and other teams think he is no play cricket he play doing fake.

played so our Pakistan is
should of because Pakistan and India
match is most popular in our
world because in this match
every player take competition in
other player that, & why match
is very interesting every people look
this match and every work
and not doing just looking match
and sleep. Pakistan is a good
cricket team and Pakistan is danger
other team.