

CERTIFICATE IN BILINGUAL SKILLS 2009

WRITTEN MARKERS' REPORTS

CANTONESE

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Since the candidate number was very low, it is difficult to make any comparisons. The letter-writing task was translated quite comprehensively in accordance with the information contained in the task. The main weakness, however, was the repetition of inaccuracies in the usage of certain Chinese characters, eg the translation of "required", "five", "wheelchair", "to mind", "bed" etc. They were simple enough terms but nonetheless were written out in an incorrect way (similar to spelling mistakes) which as a result impeded the overall performance of the task. Another weakness was the use of an informal register towards the end of the task.

Recommendations to Centres

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- build up a bilingual term bank and make reference to it if needed
- pay more attention to the use of correct Chinese characters
- be made aware of genre conventions and do not move away from them
- understand the purpose of the translated text for real-life situations.

Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates should:

- adhere to one script or the other (traditional or simplified) and not jump from one to the other throughout the translated text
- acquaint themselves with the usage of the correct Chinese characters
- improve the use of cohesive devices
- ensure the translated text reads fluently for the targeted reader
- ensure appropriate paraphrasing of the translated text.

DARI

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

TASK 3B: Candidates had to translate a leaflet about domestic violence from English into Dari for displaying on notice boards in community centres, libraries etc. Generally, performance was good apart from a few mistakes that will be addressed below.

TASK 4B: Candidates had to write a letter in Dari regarding an advert from the Social Services Department for a part time job in the house of a Dari-speaking disabled couple. Performance by many candidates in this task was very satisfactory. There were a few errors that will be discussed below.

It is not possible for me to compare this year's performance with previous years as this is the first year that the CBS examination has been set in Dari.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Grammar:

There are some minor points which need to be mentioned regarding grammar. Some of the candidates wrote sentences with no verb which can change the meaning of the sentence. The major error was regarding the translation of one sentence in particular which explained the different kinds of domestic violence. Most candidates failed to translate clearly that domestic violence is physical, sexual or mental abuse which usually happens in the home. They instead wrote that domestic violence, physical, sexual and mental abuse happen in the home. In some translations the plural forms of some words were written wrongly, for example the word for 'solicitors'.

Style, vocabulary and spelling:

Dari candidates should note that there is a difference between Farsi which is spoken mainly in Iran and Dari which is spoken in Afghanistan. There was a great deal of usage of pure Iranian Farsi in most translations, while we have the exact translation in Dari for those words. For example, the words 'court', 'Council', 'toilet', 'bath' etc. A Dari-speaking person would not understand these words if translated in Farsi.

Some candidates did not translate some words, but just wrote them as they are in English, such as 'organisation', 'housing', 'part time', 'full time' etc. In my view this is a serious matter because a Dari speaker who cannot understand any English will struggle with such a translation.

There were some additions and omissions in the translations that in general did not affect the meaning of the text.

A few spelling errors were seen that should not be made at this level. Examples: 'English', 'opportunity' and 'room'.

Some candidates completely ignored letter-writing and translated the text without forming a letter. On one occasion, a candidate did not follow the instructions and wrote the letter to a different person (candidates were asked to write the letter to Mr and Mrs Azizi, but the candidate addressed it to Mr Brown).

Recommendations to Centres

Candidates' knowledge of the language should be assessed prior to the test. They should be encouraged to enrich their terminology bank as it was quite noticeable that most candidates used Farsi words instead of Dari, which indicates that our candidates suffer from a shortage in their Dari terminology bank.

Candidates should be encouraged to improve their grammar and spelling. It is understandable that some candidates have been away from their native language for a considerably long time and some spelling and grammar rules have been forgotten. They should be advised to have more contact with their own community and read more online Dari papers.

Group work is the best way to share information, especially for enriching candidates' terminology banks. There were a few outstanding translations and beautiful handwriting among the candidates that are a result of their hard work.

In general, the performance was good but of course this could be improved further by taking the above steps.

Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates should pay attention to usage of correct grammar and spelling. They should always double check their translation and make sure that there is nothing left out of the text and their translation is easily readable.

Most candidates had difficulty in translating certain English words, such as 'part time', 'full time', 'housing', 'Council', 'organisation' etc. Although there are exact words in Dari for the above, I recommend using a short explanation if the word is highly technical or there is no equivalent in Dari.

Most candidates have used Iranian Farsi in their translations while we have equivalent words in Dari. Candidates are recommended to use Dari dictionaries, not Farsi ones. They should use internet sources to enrich their terminology bank. It is understandable that there are not many Dari dictionaries available, but it is possible to find out about Dari words through involvement with the Afghani community in the UK and all over the world.

My suggestion to candidates is to read the instructions carefully before translating, as some candidates failed to write letters or addressed the letter to the wrong person. Thus every single instruction has to be read carefully.

Be aware that legal, health and criminal systems are different in Afghanistan compared to the UK. Therefore the purpose of each terminology has to be taken into account and translated accordingly.

Clarity and accuracy of the text should be one of your priorities. Punctuation rules are a very important issue with which to become familiar.

ENGLISH: TASKS 3A AND 4A

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Task 3A TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

The text for translation was a letter from a residents' association, giving their views on a Council's plan to reduce street lighting to save money. The majority of candidates managed to produce an adequate translation, and there were some excellent ones. Those who failed did so through a combination of weak control of basic grammar and spelling, and inaccurate vocabulary.

Some key terms were either not known, or the other-language term was not recognised for what it meant. Thus, for example, "Council" was rendered as "congress" or "committee" by some Somali candidates. This and similar cases were probably due to injudicious use of dictionaries. "Make savings of £65,000 a year" appeared as "they have a budget of £65,000 a year". "Consultation" as "counselling". "Extinction" (of street lights) was a "false friend" from a French candidate, as was "foreseen" (prévu) and "£60,000 must be economised" (saved).

Other inaccurate vocabulary choices included:

"two cars have been devastated" (vandalised)

"nicked" was too colloquial for "stolen"

"I attended a funeral in my country" was rendered as "I went back to my country for grieving"

"street lighting" as "lightning in the street"

"lack of consultation" as "lack of conversation".

Many candidates have difficulty forming the passive, or confused the forms and uses of active and passive: "I shocked to read it"; "should be apologised me"; "this has not discussed"; "crimes have been increased"; "was belonged to me"; "the decision has not been consulted with the residents".

"Two burglaries have been committed" was changed into "two burglars have been convicted".

"There will be a danger from slippery pavements with ice in winter" became: "They would be in danger of snowed footprints".

The sentence about solar energy and low energy light bulbs was confusingly rendered e.g. "the strongness of electricity and the weakness of some of the lampposts"; "they can use solar system and weak lights"; "solo system".

"People who do not work 9 to 5" was changed into "people who are unemployed from 9 to 5" which is not at all the same thing.

The following offering: "Ninty year old woman went out side for throwing her rubbish she fall down from the ladder stick", probably also resulted from misuse of the dictionary.

"Alternatives have not been considered" was changed to "they did not think about anything else".

"Newsagents have had their newspapers stolen" became "Agents of news have been stolen".

The passive was often not used: "a meeting has suggested"; "since the scheme tried"; "money of taxpayers are misusing"; "money are spending"; "newspapers are stealing"; "we scared from slippery pavement" or wrongly used: "criminals were increased".

Spelling mistakes can result in total misunderstanding e.g. “residents of state” (= the estate).

Colloquial forms should be avoided, e.g. “there’s gonna be a saving”.

TASK 4A LETTER IN ENGLISH

The task was to respond to a letter from the Refuse Department accusing a resident of placing rubbish in the wrong bins, pointing out inaccuracies in their version of events.

There were a number of very good answers. Stronger candidates warmed to their theme, producing polite but assertive letters in the correct style, linking the other-language notes and the original letter in a well-organised and authentic way.

Some weaker candidates merely translated the other-language stimulus note, without making the purpose of the letter clear. This is not sufficient: it is necessary to relate the letter to the one to which it is the reply, e.g. by rebutting the statements made; otherwise the intended recipient would not know what they had received, nor how to deal with it.

Some replied to the accusations without mentioning which accusation they were replying to, e.g. “It was not me” (i.e. the person who put meat bones in the green bin).

Some of the phraseology was quaint: “I am thinking to bring a cat for reducing rat”; “but of course, for big mouses, I look for one cat”.

As always, spelling errors of even a single letter resulted in comic effects: “As regards papers and unwashed bet food in brown bin, I am to inform you that I have no bets like cat or dog but due to rat trouble I am thinking of having a bet cat to minimise them”.

Others, by contrast, produced letters with a certain verve, e.g. “I have a pretty good idea who could be the culprit” (i.e. the persons who put the wrong rubbish in his bin).

The attempt to come up with a phrase like “I am not an anti-social person” resulted in some odd versions, e.g. “I am not a person who is not part of the society”; “...who does not aware about the society”; “I am not a person who agins environment”.

Relative clauses cause problems for some from Indian subcontinent languages, e.g. using “so” for “that” to introduce the clause: “I think so, I am a victim of wrong assessment”.

Spelling caused an amusing error: “I am a vegetarian and never using any types of meat. So how you can find meat balls in my beans?” (= bins!).

Some used a rather old-fashioned style, e.g. “I thankfully acknowledge”; “below mentioned”.

“With beast regards” would not impress the reader.

Recommendations to Centres

Candidates offering languages which lack close equivalents of key terms in the UK system (e.g. Council), should be encouraged by their centres to make a glossary of these, rather than relying on dictionaries, which, in the case of languages like Kurdish and Somali or Pashto, are inadequate for the purpose of this kind of translation work.

Recommendations to Candidates

In planning your studies, be constantly aware of your weaknesses. If you are not aware of them, get someone, for example a teacher, to perform an “audit” of your current level, highlighting key areas for you to prioritise e.g. spelling, use of the passive, prepositions, relative clauses (especially Asian languages), articles (Slavonic Languages), “false friends” (French and Spanish candidates).

FRENCH

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The result has improved compared with last year, especially in the letter-writing task.

In the translation, the original text was understood, but there were a few phrasing problems with specialist vocabulary (“domestic abuse” was rendered by “abus conjugal” instead of “violence conjugale” for example) and was translated “word-for-word”. However altogether the translation conveyed the meaning of the original and could be used as intended. There were only a few minor inaccuracies.

Technically, there were some errors in the spelling, grammar and syntax, including a fair number of missing accents sometimes fairly serious (for example, “a” conjugated form of “avoir” (to have) instead of “à” (at/to).

The letter was quite good and the instructions had been understood; nothing was mentioned about the wages, but it was the only omission. There was a mix-up in the closing statement where a candidate had taken parts of different closing statements which one cannot have together.

There was no problem with coherence and the texts were easy to read. The style was fairly good with a good use of vocabulary.

Recommendations to Centres

Not much to say this year, only that candidates need to master basic letter-writing conventions and know the correct opening and closing statements in a letter.

Recommendations to Candidates

Some basic spelling mistakes could have been avoided easily by checking in a dictionary. A good bilingual dictionary is essential.

Avoid “word-for-word” translation, as it looks clumsy in the best case and leads to serious inaccuracies in the worst case. If the meaning is still unclear after checking in a bilingual dictionary, check in a monolingual dictionary.

GUJARATI

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

There was a good understanding of the demands of the task and these demands were well addressed. The appropriate words and phrases were used to express the ideas.

I would strongly recommend candidates to prepare carefully for the CBS examination and while preparing pay attention to the accepted written forms of some common spellings like શનિવાર, (not શનીવાર) રવિવાર, (not રવીવાર) અગિયાર. (not અઘ્યાર).

Recommendations to Centres

It is very gratifying to note that concerns expressed earlier have been addressed by all centres who enter candidates for examinations. We now enter Phase II where candidates should be encouraged to polish their presentation by re-reading and eliminating some minor common mistakes that occur particularly in Gujarati e.g. the spoken form expressed in writing – ફું ચાઈલો, (ફું ચાલ્યો) કામ કઈરું (કામ કર્યું). Candidates should form a habit of referring to the dictionary when in doubt and should pay particular attention to the spellings mentioned above (શનિરવિ, અગિયાર, etc.)

Recommendations to Candidates

Please read the local Gujarati press and make notes of terms used by the media in this country. When you receive your examination paper please spend the allocated time to read the requirements of the task at hand and only address the necessary requirements. It is quite tempting to add information to the task which is clearly not asked for. Please re-read the finished task and eliminate common errors that tend to occur when in a hurry.

KURDISH (SORANI)

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The overall performance of candidates in 3B was very poor. The main problems were as follows:

- The candidates seemed to lack the knowledge of specialist terminology.
- The candidates lacked accuracy when rendering the text.
- There were a number of grammatical/structural mistakes, which made texts sound like back translations.
- There were lots of spelling mistakes that made the translated text difficult to follow.
- There were some transliterations, such as: 'full time', 'part time' and 'social services departments'.

The overall performance of candidates in 4B was much better. It seemed that most of the candidates were very familiar with the task and did it fairly well. However, the main problem that all the candidates seemed to have was to do with spelling.

Recommendations to Centres

- Encourage candidates to be familiar with the task requirements.
- Encourage candidates to be familiar with the specialist terminology.
- Encourage candidates to be as accurate as possible and avoid guessing when rendering the text.

Recommendations to Candidates

- Be familiar with the task and its requirements.
- Carefully read the text before translating/writing.
- The translated work needs to be as accurate as possible, i.e. without any addition or omission, and make sure that literal translation is avoided.
- Be familiar with specialist terminology and expressions in both languages (source and target).
- Work on grammatical points, such as: word order/parts of speech and the relative pronouns.
- Improve spelling by checking words in the dictionary.
- Avoid transliterations as much as possible.

PANJABI (INDIAN)

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The performance of candidates is better than last year. Some candidates provided really good translations and letters. However, some candidates did not understand the requirements of the task and had no idea how to write a letter. The overall weakness was not being able to understand and encode the original text and poor written skills. There were far too many spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. Lack of terminology is also a major weakness. Sentence rendering is also a major problem as some candidates wrote sentences in the same way in which they were written in English. One has to reorganise the words to render a proper sentence in Panjabi.

Recommendations to Centres

Centres should have a higher standard for choosing the candidates for CBS exams. Candidates should have very good spoken and written skills in both languages.

Centres should encourage candidates to improve their general written skills; extra translation course work should be provided for candidates, as well as letter-writing exercises. Candidates should be better informed about the structure of the exam and what is required of them. Candidates should be encouraged to use dictionaries but make sure they use the correct word for the context. Centres should have more mock exams which will prepare candidates for the real exams.

Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates should take extra care to understand the text and what is required of them and also take care when using the vowel symbols, as a wrongly placed vowel symbol or missing the symbols is a mistake which can cost the candidate. The proper shape of Panjabi letters also should be taken into consideration, as missing a top line or placing it in the wrong place can change the letter and the meaning of the whole word and, of course, the whole sentence. Always render a good sentence by shuffling the words and using correct words for the context. The use of dictionaries is very helpful but always use the correct word for the text. Newspapers, magazines, radio and television are a great source for learning vocabulary and for keeping up with language changes.

PASHTO

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

As this is the first year for the CBS in Pashto, I cannot compare any previous performances. However, as far as the work of this year is concerned, any reasonably good skills and knowledge of Pashto writing were not demonstrated. To begin with even simple words were misspelt, such as **كوم** (which), **تهديد** (threat - wrongly used as the equivalent for violence), **چوپ** (silent). More importantly, the nature of such mistakes convincingly indicates that there was very little familiarity with Pashto literature, and mostly spoken slang language was relied upon. Major grammatical mistakes were made in terms of word order, pronouns, different states of verbs, structure, range and appropriacy of vocabulary. Furthermore, there was a failure to meet even a very low benchmark of writing a very simple application letter. Aside from the Pashto, English comprehension was poor as well. For instance "concern" was misunderstood as "cancer disease", and "women's refuge" was mistaken as "asylum seeker women". In addition, a failure to understand the instruction given as adequately as required, caused the mistake of addressing the text to Mr John Brown instead of Mr and Mrs Gull.

Recommendations to Centres

Please see recommendations to candidates.

Recommendations to Candidates

My recommendations to candidates are: read, read, and read Pashto literature, advance your grammar, improve your spelling, enrich your vocabulary, and practise writing as much as you can. You have paved a long way and some hard and well-concentrated work will certainly enable you to overcome the problems that have let you down this time. "Benawa" and "Afghan Adabi Baheer" are two sites which can effectively help you in improving and finally standardising your Pashto writing. The other point that seems to me worth mentioning is that bearing in mind the structure, word order and some other grammatical aspects of one candidate's text, it makes me assume that his/her first language is Dari and that persuades me to advise the candidate, as I am sure s/he knows, there are some significant differences between Pashto and Dari grammar-wise; for instance word order, pronouns, prepositions, relation between subject and verb, etc. The candidate may need to identify these differences and work on them.

POLISH

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

There were 8 candidates sitting the exam in Polish. I marked all 8 papers.

The overall performance was good. All candidates seemed to have a good command of both English and Polish, with the exception of one person whose Polish was not satisfactory (grammatical errors). There were no obvious cases of misunderstanding instructions. There were no major decoding or encoding errors either, except for a few isolated words rather than the entire gist of the text.

Terms which posed a problem to a number of candidates were:

Expenses
Non-judgemental
Refuge

Many candidates used incorrect, inauthentic syntax when translating sentences starting with “*however*”; this has not changed over the years.

Some candidates did not seem to read their work before submitting it – there were words missing, or repeated twice, grammatical endings which did not go with the noun they referred to etc. Again, this is something that happens every year and causes many candidates to lose marks.

One candidate provided alternatives in his or her target text, i.e. “zakwaterowanie / dom” or “charytatywna / wolontariacka”, 10 (dziesięć) (*accommodation / house; charitable / voluntary, 10 (ten)*). It is one of the fixed rules of translation that the translator should choose the most appropriate term, rather than expecting the reader to do it themselves.

Another candidate made numerous additions in Task 3B. It was a well written target text, but obviously it was wrong to be adding to the source text.

In Task 4B, two of the three candidates left the date in English. Also, the layout of the letter (positioning of date, addresses etc) was often English. I did not consider this a good enough reason to fail or seriously mark down, because western templates are often used in the context of applying for work; however, it would be recommended to be familiar with Polish conventions and use them in the examination.

A final point is to do with genders. *Employee, worker* or *volunteer* can be male or female in English but in Polish there are separate words for males and females. In Task 3B, female should have been used as the organisation only employs females.

Recommendations to Centres

Please see comments below.

Recommendations to Candidates

- Proofread your text before submitting; as obvious as it sounds, every year there are many candidates who lose marks on trivial mistakes (e.g. repeating the same word twice in a row; lack of consistency between the gender of subject and predicate etc).
- Pay attention to detail. Many candidates produced a good letter, but forgot about the date, signature etc. Every year there are some candidates who omit whole sentences or paragraphs.
- Make sure you are familiar with letter-writing conventions in your target language.
- It never hurts to revise basic spelling and punctuation rules which we all learnt at school and perhaps have forgotten as time goes by.
- Follow instructions. If you are asked to make a written translation (Task 3B), make a written translation. Do not unleash your imagination to create a text that has little in common with the English source text, even if it reads very well in the target language.

PORTUGUESE (BRAZILIAN)

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

As this was my first year marking for this examination I cannot compare it to past performances.

This year there were several instances of inaccurate terminology: “workplace” was translated as “offices”, “assaults” translated as “cases”; “part-time” as “standby” and an incorrect translation of “Housing and Social Service Departments”. One candidate used the incorrect date format in Task 4B. Punctuation was an issue, as was the use of accents which are crucial in the Portuguese language.

Recommendations to Centres

Please remember to carry out a regular assessment of candidates and advise them on their strengths and weaknesses

Recommendations to Candidates

Instigate your centre to carry out regular and realistic assessments of your abilities and of the areas in which you require additional work. Practise accurate note-taking while watching the news, recording the news broadcast for subsequent comparison.

PORTUGUESE (EUROPEAN)

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Performance was very poor. Compared to last year, there was no improvement in terms of the quality of the work produced. A great lack of knowledge in terms of the general conventions of the target language was demonstrated. Written skills were very poor and need a great deal of improvement. There was an inability to respond reasonably to what was being requested, especially in Task 4B, when the task of writing a letter proved to be unattainable. General rendering in both tasks was very weak and consistently inadequate. A lot of grammatical, syntactical and lexical mistakes were made. As a whole, the work produced is far from corresponding to the required level.

Recommendations to Centres

Candidates should be taught some basic translation techniques and theory of translation to better understand the importance of achieving a coherent and faithful text in the target language – one that makes “natural sense” when reading. Language tutoring (English and the other language) would be a solution to addressing most common weaknesses. They should be encouraged to do simple rephrasing exercises in both source and target language to get used to searching for alternatives and different vocabulary. Research enlarges the lexicon of the individual and exercises and stretches logical thinking.

Recommendations to Candidates

Being a native speaker of a language does not necessarily mean mastering the language or having good written skills. Practise manual writing as much as possible. Computers have integrated software that will automatically correct your spelling. This way, you will not be made aware of areas that need improvement. Reading in both languages (source and target language) is most definitely another way of learning new vocabulary and assimilating writing techniques. Do not limit your reading to specific material on your chosen topics. I would also strongly advise you to revise grammar rules: tenses of the verbs, gender, plural, syntactical constructions as these are important evaluation points.

RUSSIAN

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

As the number of candidates is extremely small it is impossible to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the group. Equally, there were no written papers last year, so one cannot make any comparisons.

Most of the information was conveyed accurately, and there were no grammar or spelling errors. My only criticism is that one candidate tried to be a little too formal in the letter, and this resulted in unintended clumsiness.

Recommendations to Centres

More attention should be given to the register so that the letters sound natural and not too bureaucratic in order to avoid cumbersome constructions.

Recommendations to Candidates

Wide-ranging, close reading of a variety of sources in both languages is essential. Attention should be paid not only to vocabulary but to the use of linking devices and sentence structure.

SLOVAK

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Three candidates entered this language combination this year and the quality of the resulting translations was quite variable. The translation provided for Task 3B was acceptable with some issues highlighted below. The letter-writing task (4B) caused most problems to all candidates. Whilst there was an example of a very well structured and well written letter, some candidates had issues with the application of letter-writing conventions in Slovak (appropriate formulaic language to begin and end a formal letter in Slovak was an issue for one of the candidates, as well as the use of capital letters in *Vy*, *Váš* etc.).

Recommendations to Centres

More attention needs to be given to letter-writing conventions (as above) and, very importantly, to the grammar. Extensive technical faults let down candidates in Task 4B. This included spelling, use of diacritics (e.g. all the candidates used incorrect spelling of 'keďže'). Reading of Slovak newspapers, texts, etc would greatly aid in this in addition to formal revision of grammatical rules.

Recommendations to Candidates

It is important to build your confidence and vocabulary in both languages by reading as much relevant text in both languages as possible. The web enables access to Slovak newspapers and TV news can also be very useful in building up vocabulary. Serious problems with spelling and/or the use of diacritics affected the performance of most of the candidates, particularly in Task 4B. Incorrect use of capital letters in *Vy*, *Váš*, etc in Slovak gives an impression of unprofessionalism, which I am sure you would not like to convey. *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu* can be very useful in checking the correct forms and reinforcing the grammatical rules of our language – a good investment for the future life of a bilingual worker. Finally, always read the translated text at the end of the task and check whether it reads as a native Slovak text (rather than a translation from English).

SOMALI

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

This is the first time I have marked a test relating to writing an application for a job. Most of the candidates had written a friendly letter using informal language rather than the more formal language needed for an application for a job. They also missed making use of the points given to them to help them get the job and did not explain accurately why they were suitable. As I have said before I think candidates need to be informed or trained in the requirements of the examination before taking the exam. Many candidates could not differentiate between a formal application and a friendly letter.

Recommendations to Centres

Candidates should feel relaxed and comfortable in the centres. Centres should provide orientation sessions so that candidates get more familiar with the structure and the requirements of the examination.

Recommendations to Candidates

The reason why many candidates have performed badly is that they have not yet mastered writing in the Somali language. Being a native speaker of a language is not sufficient. Candidates should take Somali language courses to learn how to write a piece of information in Somali. Many candidates make so many spelling mistakes that sometimes it is difficult to understand what they have written. They should also improve their handwriting as many of them seem to be careless. Candidates should pay attention to the proper use of grammar, spelling and vocabulary which will help them pass the test.

SPANISH

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

Task 3B: Translation of leaflet on volunteering:

This year scripts presented numerous inaccuracies and grammar and syntax (G&S) mistakes. Candidates lost marks because of weaknesses in terminology; improper knowledge of mandatory uses of the subjunctive in certain clauses; misuse of prepositions or their omission after certain verbs; improper use of Spanish gerund; improper use of passive constructions such as "*mujeres quienes son sufridas de abuso*"; omission of article when needed; English interference in the translation of parts of the text and particularly of the title, which was mistranslated in certain scripts as "*Oportunidad voluntaria*". Literal, non-idiomatic translations were also frequent. There were also instances of institutional and/or specific terms not adequately conveyed such as *Housing, Social Services Department, women's refuge*.

Task 4B: Letter to a disabled couple requiring home care:

One of the candidates produced a very proficient letter, using effectively the elements provided in the brief as well as incorporating a good account of previous experience in the care of the disabled. However this was not the norm and the majority referred only briefly to unspecific previous experiences with relatives or elderly people.

One candidate produced just a translation of the newspaper advertisement included in the candidate's brief and therefore could not be assessed on letter-writing skills.

Errors in G&S were frequent, particularly use of prepositions, omission of subjunctive when mandatory and inadequate use of passive constructions. In reference to terminology, there was some difficulty in finding a Spanish equivalent to "*studying social care*"; "*domestic work*" was translated in one script as "*trabajo interno*" and "*accommodation*" rendered as "*acomodación*", all cases resulting in an unnatural Spanish.

The conventions of letter-writing were in general observed, with occasional slips such as "*Espero escuchar de ustedes*";

which is a literal translation from English and not used in Spanish as a letter ending. Cohesion was impaired by the conflicting use of formal and informal pronouns to address the recipients of the application letter. In others cases, the omission of proper connectives prevented a logical relation between parts of the text. In one instance the use of a different name for the applicant in the first paragraph from that in the signature was a careless error which seriously affected coherence.

Recommendations to Centres

It appears that some candidates are not familiar with the format of this examination and not sufficiently trained in the formalities and conventions of letter-writing. In Task 4B candidates must convey to the intended recipient all relevant elements of the brief and, drawing from their own knowledge of the topic, incorporate some other information as required. Candidates should produce a formal letter and not a translation of the brief. Centres should provide enough practice material to ensure familiarity with all the vocabulary areas covered by both components of the written test. Also, centres should ensure that the candidates' linguistic standard is of the required level.

Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates must ensure their command of language is adequate for the requirements of this examination. They also should be aware that dictionaries should be used wisely and that no dictionary is ever a substitute for sound background knowledge of the areas covered by the examination. Candidates need to show they are able to adequately translate specific terminology and effectively manipulate information and language. They should also be aware that Task 4B is a formal letter and therefore it is a task based essay and not a translation of the brief.

URDU

Overall Performance of Candidates (compared to last year, where possible) and any Particular Strengths and Weaknesses of the Candidate Group

The following comments are made on the basis of 5 Urdu scripts. The overall performance was below the required CBS level. However, one candidate secured a Merit in Task 4B.

The failed candidates' performance in the use of Urdu grammar and the construction of sentences was poor. Very often they adhered to the source language in terms of its sentence structure instead of converting it appropriately to the syntax of the target language, thus affecting the flow of the Urdu text. The frequent spelling mistakes of the failed candidates in almost every written line also indicates an inadequate command of the written Urdu language together with a poor use of both normal and specialist Urdu vocabulary. Please also see the sections below.

Recommendations to Centres

The candidates who failed appear to have been born and brought up here in England. They may have a good command of the spoken Urdu language but their written Urdu is very poor. Centres have been advised many times in the past that they should test students before they enrol them for the course, or they should prepare them well for their written examination by giving them written home work on a regular basis and keep a record of their performance.

Recommendations to Candidates

Candidates are advised to read the Briefs carefully when handling the task of letter-writing. There is no harm in breaking down the long English paragraphs into small Urdu sentences for Task 3B. They should avoid following the source language grammatical/syntactical structure by converting it appropriately into their own target language. Many candidates fall into this trap and fail or receive low marks. Bilingual dictionaries should be used carefully. Pick the word which is suitable for the context. The best thing is to do a lot of practice in translating small segments on a regular basis – perhaps two different segments of 100 words each every week. You will be surprised how quickly you will pick up the speed and techniques of translation at your level.