

3.0 ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

The English examination consisted of two sections: **Section A** comprising objective items and **Section B** comprising a composition - writing task.

3.1 GENERAL CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE

Table 2 below shows the candidates' performance in the year 2007 KCPE English examination. Similar data for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 is given for comparison.

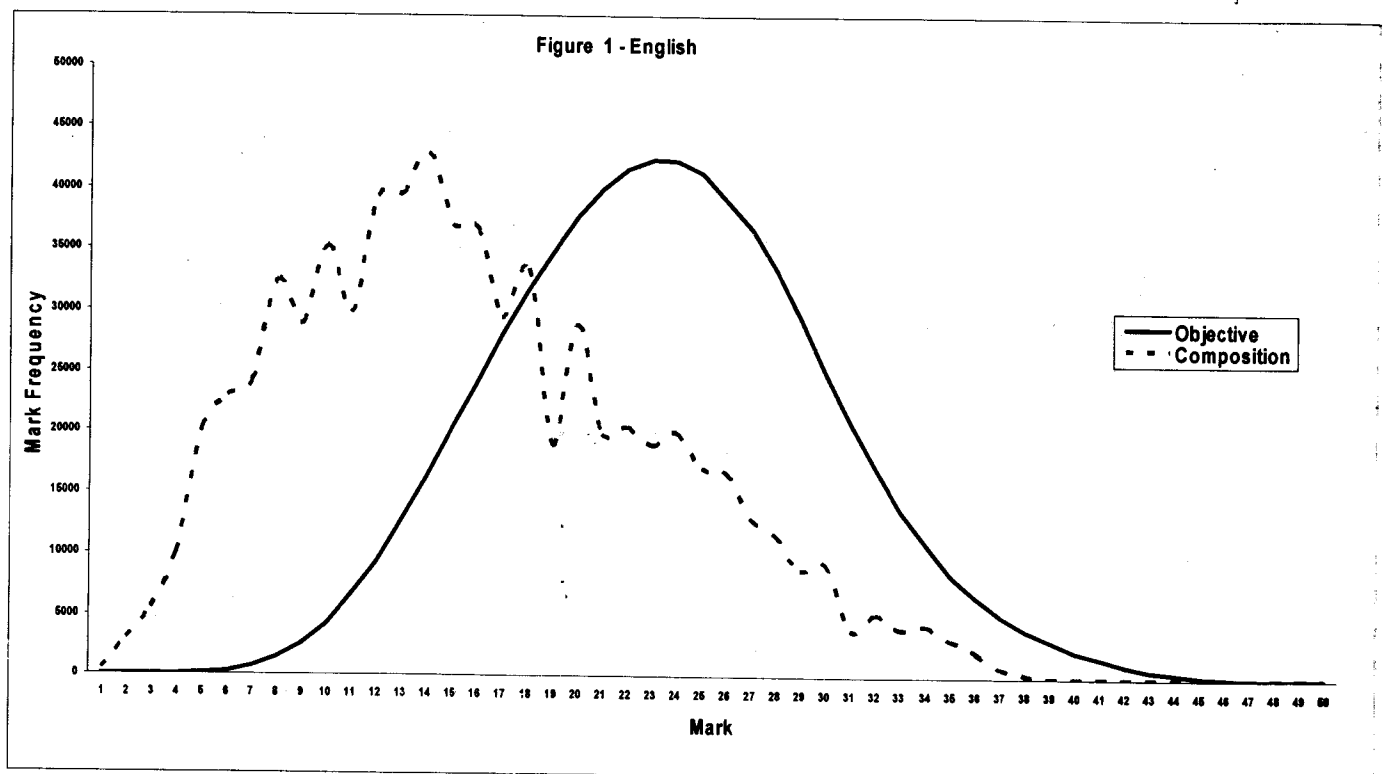
TABLE 2: General Candidates' Performance in English over the last four years

Year	2004		2005		2006		2007	
Paper	Obj	Comp	Obj	Comp	Obj	Comp	Obj	Comp
% Mean	45.74	35.77	43.10	36.30	45.88	35.47	47.02	41.10

From **Table 2** above, the following observations can be made:

- i) The percentage mean for the objective paper improved by 1.14 points from 45.88 in 2006 to 47.02 in the year 2007.
- ii) The percentage mean for the composition paper improved by 5.63 points from 35.47 in the year 2006 to 41.10 in the year 2007.

Figure 1 below shows the performance in the two sections of the examination graphically.

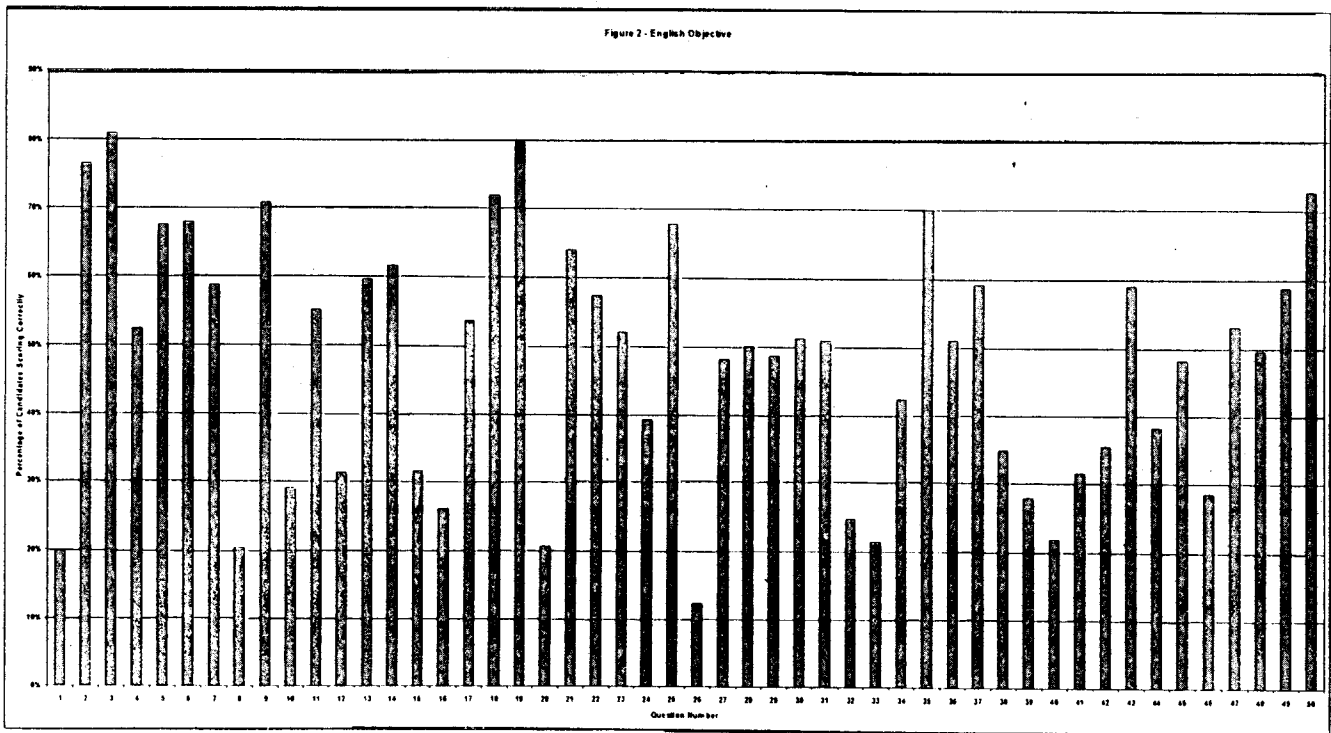


3.2 SECTION A: OBJECTIVE PAPER

The percentage mean for this paper improved by *1.14* points from *45.88* in the year 2006 to *47.02* in the year 2007.

3.2.1 Analysis of selected items

Figure 2 below shows the pattern of performance per item in the objective paper for the sample.



From Figure 2 above, it can be observed that there were eleven (11) questions in the year 2007 KCPE English objective paper in which 30% or less of the candidates scored correctly. These questions, together with the percentages of candidates scoring correctly are as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Questions with a Facility Index of 30% and below:

Question Number	1	8	10	16	20	26
% Scoring Correctly	19.79	20.26	28.93	26.09	20.69	12.40

Question Number	32	33	39	40	46
% Scoring Correctly	24.68	21.37	27.88	21.88	28.51

Questions 1, 8 and 10 were all based on the cloze passage below. Three out of fifteen items in the cloze passage gave candidates problems:

Question 1 to 15

Read the passage below. It contains blank spaces numbered 1 to 15. For each blank space, choose the best alternative from the choices given.

Few people would 1 that physical exercise is important for 2 health. It is not only those who 3 part in competitive sports and games who need to exercise 4. Our bodies are 5 in such a way that we tend to become weak and lazy 6 we remain inactive over long periods of time. The benefits of exercising are 7. First, we feel a sense of freshness and fitness as we move 8 doing our daily duties. In addition, the circulation of blood 9 our bodies is improved. Our immune system is boosted so we don't get ill very often. 10, we are able to endure longer periods of 11 work without feeling exhausted. Our digestive system is also improved hence our bodies get maximum 12 from the food we eat. Vigorous exercise done at least twice a week will enable us to enjoy these benefits. 13, there is need to consult a doctor 14 a person who is experienced in physical training before starting an exercise 15 since our bodies differ in the type of activities each of us can comfortably do.

Question 1

- A. reject B. oppose C. refuse D. deny

Response Pattern

Option	A	B	C	D*
% Choosing option	17.57	49.65	12.13	19.79
Mean mark in other questions	21.15	24.65	19.89	28.82

Candidates were required to choose the most suitable word to fit the blank space in meaning and structure. Options A, B and C are outright wrong as the structure precludes them. The presence of 'that' in the construction can only accept 'deny'(option D). This was realized by the very best candidates.

Question 8

- A. on B. about C. along D. round

Response Pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing option	51.85	20.26	10.89	15.82
Mean mark in other questions	23.28	30.16	23.24	20.68

The candidates were expected to make a choice of adverb particle that collocates with the verb in the circumstances described. It is possible to 'move on', 'move along' or 'move round', but not with doing our daily duties. This has to be 'move about'!(Option B).

Question 10

- A. Furthermore B. Nevertheless C. Consequently D. Therefore

Response Pattern

Option	A*	B	C	D
% Choosing option	28.93	8.62	7.88	53.37
Mean mark in other questions	27.77	22.92	20.14	23.20

Candidates were expected to read and, using the context clues, determine whether the writer is continuing to give further benefits of exercising or is moving on to make a contrast or draw a conclusion or indicate a result. The candidate then was to accordingly select the sentence connector that is appropriate. Of the four options given, only *'furthermore'* (option A) is adding and hence the correct response.

Question 16

In questions 16 and 17, choose the best arrangement of the given sentences to make sensible paragraphs.

- (i) They found it hard to survive.
- (ii) Mr and Mrs Onyancha were poor and humble.
- (iii) A little cassava and some porridge was their staple diet.
- (iv) There was hardly ever enough food in their home.

- A. (ii) (iii) (i) (iv)
- B. (ii) (i) (iv) (iii)
- C. (ii) (i) (iii) (iv)
- D. (ii) (iv) (iii) (i)

Response Pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing option	6.83	26.09	13.98	51.89
Mean mark in other questions	19.55	25.71	21.02	25.04

The candidates were required to choose the best arrangement of the given sentences to form a sensible paragraph. There are no two ways of going about this. Only one set of arrangement gives the correct sense given the starting point and the alternatives suggested.

Question 20

They are very kind to me. They treat me _____ their own child.

- A. like I was
- B. like I were
- C. as if I were
- D. as if I was.

Response Pattern

Option	A	B	C*	D
% Choosing option	14.49	5.61	20.69	57.99
Mean mark in other questions	20.69	23.16	28.84	23.65

The candidates were required to select the correct hypothetical case to fill the gap in the given sentence. Options *A* and *B* are outright wrong. While it could be argued that option *D* is progressively becoming acceptable, at least in speech, the formal grammatical case is captured in option *C*.

Question 26, 32 and 33 were based on the comprehension passage below.

Read the passage below and then answer questions 26 to 38.

Maina's friend, Odhiambo, began to teach him how to ride a bicycle during the holidays. Odhiambo himself had no bicycle, but he could easily borrow one from a mechanic. This mechanic lived in one of the rental rooms owned by Odhiambo's father. During the day, he worked under a tree in front of the house. Many people brought their bicycles to him to be repaired. Sometimes they wanted the brakes mended or a punctured tube repaired. Whatever it was, the mechanic was equal to the job. If you passed by any time of the day, you would see him in his brown greasy work clothes putting life into a damaged bicycle. Usually, he turned the bicycle upside-down with its wheels in the air while he worked on it. A signboard with his nickname, DOCTOR OF BICYCLES, was nailed to the tree.

Besides the bicycles which came to him for repairs, the mechanic also had about five or six of his own which he hired out for ten shillings an hour. It was one of these Odhiambo borrowed. He did not tell the mechanic that a learner was going to ride it.

The bicycle was meant for adults and was too high for Maina but he made rapid progress. If he sat on the saddle, his feet would not reach the pedals. So he adopted what was called the monkey-style; he rode standing on the pedals on one side of the triangular frame.

After about one week of practice, Maina was able to ride long distances without falling off. He was even able to whistle a song as he rode along. Odhiambo was impressed with Maina's progress and suggested that it was time he tried riding on the main road instead of the playing field.

Maina was a little doubtful at first, but he agreed in the end to try one of the less busy roads. To his surprise, he did very well. He was so pleased that he began to whistle a popular tune and pedal to the beat. He felt very proud of himself and wondered why people said cycling was difficult. 'It is easier than eating "ugali"', he thought. Just then, a car came out of a side road and was heading towards him. He lost his nerve and swerved, hitting an electricity pole. He was thrown into a nearby drain out of which he emerged dripping dirty water.

Although Maina was only slightly injured, the bicycle was badly damaged. The front wheel was twisted and three spokes also got broken. After fruitless repair efforts, Maina and Odhiambo decided to go and report to the mechanic. They had to roll the bicycle on the back wheel as they lifted the handle-bars between them.

The mechanic was very angry. He said Maina had to pay for the damage. Maina pleaded with him saying he had no money.

'If you have no money, who told you to ride my bicycle? Come and show me where you live. Your parents will pay for your foolishness. And if you don't hurry up, I will take you to the police station right now,' the mechanic said when Maina appeared to hesitate.

So Maina led the way and the mechanic followed on one of his bicycles. Maina was afraid of taking the man to his uncle. So he decided to take him round and round the town. They went up one street, down the next and up the third.

'Where do you live?' asked the mechanic.

'I don't know the number,' said Maina, 'but it is over there,' and he pointed in front of him.

After a long time they were back where they had started. The mechanic was now furious and was threatening to beat Maina. Blind with anger, he did not look where he was going and ran into a woman returning home from the market with her purchases. She immediately took off her head-scarf and tied it firmly round her waist, ready for a fight. She held the mechanic by his shirt and shouted at him.

Crowds were gathering. Some people were picking up the woman's things and putting them back into her basket. There were tomatoes, potatoes and some fish. But her voice rose higher and higher. She said she was not going home to prepare a meal from things picked off the road. She wanted two hundred shillings in compensation.

In the confusion, Maina melted away and ran home. In the evening, he reported to his uncle what he had done. His uncle was disappointed but he offered to pay for the repair of the damaged bicycle.

(Adapted from *Chike and the River*, by Chinua Achebe)

Question 26

From the first paragraph, we can tell that Odhiambo

- A. came from a poor family
- B. was easy to get along with
- C. liked teaching people things
- D. lived near the mechanic.

Response pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing option	5.87	12.40	25.12	55.31
Mean mark in other questions	21.02	28.29	22.45	24.55

The candidates were required to deduce information about a character from what is given in the passage. The candidate was expected to apply the elimination method to arrive at the correct answer. Option *A* is wrong because Odhiambo's father owned the rental houses one of which the mechanic occupied. Option *C* is too general. We are not told of any other people Odhiambo taught anything. Option *B* presupposes that Odhiambo's family lived in the same place with the mechanic who rented a room from them. We are not told this. This leaves option *B*. Odhiambo easily borrowed a bicycle from the mechanic. He and Maina seemed to be getting along very well.

Question 32

Which of the following **best** describes Maina's attitude as he rode on the main road?

- A. pleased
- B. proud
- C. excited
- D. overconfident.

Response pattern

Option	A	B	C	D*
% Choosing option	16.63	46.23	10.98	24.68
Mean mark in other questions	21.80	25.02	22.72	25.25

This was a test of vocabulary. The candidate was expected to select the most suitable adjective to describe the attitude of a character. The options *A*, *B* and *C* all applied, but they do not convey the fuller meaning of option *D* which was the best option.

Question 33

The actual cause of Maina's accident was

- A. the fact that he panicked
- B. his swerving the bicycle
- C. his hitting the electricity pole
- D. the car that was heading towards him.

Response pattern

Option	A*	B	C	D
% Choosing option	21.37	12.52	15.00	49.81
Mean mark in other questions	29.61	22.75	19.54	23.79

The item required the candidates to use inference. The appearance of the car (*A*) indeed sets into motion a number of events e.g. swerving (*B*), the hitting of the electricity pole (*C*) and hence the accident. But if Maina had composed himself and controlled the bicycle, no accident would have occurred.

Questions 39, 40 and 46 were based on the passage reproduced below.

Read the passage below and then answer questions 39 to 50.

The way we relate with other people determines whether our lives will be happy or not. Therefore it is important to choose our friends carefully. If you have the wrong kind of friends, your life could be miserable, full of pain and disappointment. You need to associate with those who love and accept you just as you are. They are likely to bring joy into your life. People who possess the following qualities are the right ones to befriend.

First of all, go for those who respect you. Those who allow you to be yourself, listen to you and care about your feelings. Such people do not do or say things that make you feel small or useless. You see, certain people are *so full of themselves* that they do not value anyone else's opinion. They think they are always right. They **ridicule** and belittle the contributions of others. Keep away from such characters. They are not good for you.

Another characteristic to look for in a friend is trust. Relate with people you can rely on. Such people keep their promises. When you live with others at home, community or school, you soon discover that many of them keep letting you down. I have known people who pretend to be my friends, only to realize later that they were not sincere. They just wanted to use me for their own gain. They took advantage of our relationship. I have occasionally shared some personal information with friends and I have expected them to keep it secret. But the very following day, the story is on everybody's lips. At such times, I have felt so embarrassed that I have wished the earth would open up and swallow me. So a friend you can depend on is a gem, a rare treasure.

Thirdly, in a world where people are so rude and inconsiderate, you should look for people with good manners. Life is much more enjoyable when we are thoughtful and courteous towards each other. Saying 'thank you', 'sorry' sounds very simple. However, these wonderful expressions do not exist in many people's vocabulary. Associate with people who show gratitude and who remember to apologise when they offend you. Avoid the bad-mannered because they will only cause you heartaches.

There is another quality that few people seem to possess. This is a sense of humour. Many of us take life too seriously and focus on the negative side of things. Do not be like that. Gather around you friends with whom you can enjoy a hearty belly laugh, those who can even point out things about you that you can laugh at. Of course you should not laugh at others. No, no! That is unkind. But befriend people who help you to notice the funny side of life.

Finally, do relate with people who share your interests. If you associate with people with whom you have nothing in common, you will soon get bored. Therefore, if you want to have an exciting time with people, pick those who identify with your goals and dreams. Yes, those who can encourage and help you realise the things you hope for.

Question 39

Why should you pick friends wisely?

- A. Not everyone can be your friend.
- B. They make your life happy or unhappy.
- C. Wrong friends can easily mislead you.
- D. You cannot blame anyone if you choose unwisely.

Response Pattern

Option	A	B*	C	D
% Choosing option	15.89	27.88	47.46	7.41
Mean mark in other questions	22.67	25.08	24.99	20.15

The candidates were required to read the sentences juxtaposed and get the implicature. The first two sentences of the passage contained the key to the question. The word '*therefore*' in the second sentence looks back and draws conclusion from the foregoing statement. The rest of the paragraph is an elaboration of the two. Only option **B** contains the message got from those two sentences.

Question 40

When you *ridicule* what others say, you

- A. oppose it
- B. refuse to listen
- C. completely ignore it
- D. make fun of it.

Response Pattern

Option	A	B	C	D*
% Choosing option	19.18	23.12	34.41	21.88
Mean mark in other questions	23.43	21.19	24.29	28.27

This item tested understanding of vocabulary in use. It may seem that the usage of '*ridicule*' with ideas is foreign to the candidates. They are used to the usual '*ridicule a person*'. Although the context was adequate, most candidates who chose **A**, **B** and **C** were simply guessing. Only the very best of the cohort got it right.

Question 46

If you and your friends have different interests, you are likely to

- A. find the relationship less fulfilling.
- B. forget some of your goals.
- C. find everything you do boring.
- D. stop dreaming about the future.

Response Pattern

Option	A*	B	C	D
% Choosing option	28.51	9.83	51.43	6.89
Mean mark in other questions	24.33	19.45	25.92	18.31