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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2020

Pearson Edexcel GCE Advanced Level
In Japanese (9JA0/01)
Paper 1: Translation into English, reading
comprehension and writing (research task)

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Paper 9JA01 is composed of three distinct sections: Section A is the translation into English, Section B is reading and Section C is writing (research task).

The November 2020 series was exceptional in having only a very small cohort compared with previous series, due to the issuing of Centre Assessed Grades for the vast majority of Year 13 students in Summer 2020.

Q01 was a short passage to translate from Japanese into English, about two pupils who had built their own robot. Most candidates had sufficient vocabulary to tackle this passage adequately. The second sentence proved quite challenging: some candidates find it hard to explain clearly the sequence and causation of the robot's movements. In the last sentence 成長 was a vocabulary item unknown to many candidates.

Q02 was a reading comprehension question about Japanese food exports to Japan, with an accompanying set of multiple choice questions. These were well tackled, including (ii) which tested grammatical understanding of the comparative.

Q03 was a reading text about a university student who had attended abacus class for most of his life, and set a world record with the abacus. Candidates were required to choose the four correct statements which matched the text: these questions were well answered.

Q04 was the literary text, describing how two brothers felt after they had visited their mother in hospital. Candidates were required to respond to short answer questions in Japanese, which they generally did successfully. The most challenging question was (c), requiring an explanation of why the chrysanthemums had been mentioned in the text.

Q05 was an article about a girls' basketball team, again requiring responses to be written in Japanese to reading comprehension questions. Most candidates tackled these questions extremely well. (b) proved difficult for some candidates, possibly because they did not know the verb まとまる.

Questions 06 to 09 were the writing tasks based on candidates' own research. Most candidates were able to write in good Japanese, but the problem was in understanding what they were required to do to score high marks. Candidates need to respond to the discussion statement printed under the reading text, and in respond to the statement, they need to incorporate material both from the text printed in the examination paper and also their own knowledge from their prior research.

Q06 was not very popular, but required candidates to respond to a statement about the importance of grandparents, based on a text about a young person's memory of their own grandmother.

Q07 was the most popular. Candidates needed to comment on how Western festivals changed as they come into Japan, based on a text about Valentine's Day and White Day. Some candidates only repeated information from the text and failed to incorporate any material from their own research, although the strongest candidates were able to use the concepts of *giri* and *on* in order to explain why Western customs change as they come into Japan.

Q08 was also popular: candidates had to comment on the fact that older people in Japan would need to look after themselves, using evidence from a text about cookery classes for older people, including men. Candidates had clearly done their research on this topic, as many knew facts and figures about how many elderly people lived alone and so on.

Q09 was not very popular. It required candidates to comment on the efforts in Japan to use less energy. Some candidates had researched some details about traditional Japanese

wisdom to keep cool in the hot summers, but found it difficult to incorporate this into the question posed on the examination paper.

Given the performance in this exam, students are offered the following advice:

- It is crucial to have done the research in preparation for the research question, and to have specific facts and figures to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
- The writing task (research based task) requires both reading of the text and use of your own knowledge from your research: both of these need to be used to respond to the statement printed in the paper. All three aspects (responding to the statement, incorporating material from the reading text, incorporating material from your own research) are essential in scoring well on this question.
- Candidates are generally able to write with a good level of grammatical accuracy: they are encouraged to pay slightly more attention to the content of what they write.
- Candidates are encouraged to learn kanji and use them.