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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Russian (1RU0) Paper 1H: Listening
and Understanding in Russian

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Introduction

This is the first examination of the revised GCSE and as such there are differences between the new specification and the legacy GCSE. The qualification is now divided into Foundation and Higher papers. There are 10 questions at Higher Level, covering grades 5-9 and the paper is worth 50 marks, (25% of the overall grade). The number of open-ended tasks in English has increased to 3, worth a total of 20 marks. There are also two questions in the target language accounting for 10 marks, previously there were no questions in the target language. There are also new topic areas such as the global dimension and voluntary work. Generally, students were prepared for the new test types and topics but some of the new requirements proved challenging for some students and the open-ended questions, requiring answers in English, proved daunting for less successful students. Students performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some excellent performances. There was evidence of some good listening and exam skills. Many students had used the five minutes reading time well (underlining key words in the title, rubric and questions, annotating questions), generally using the time to anticipate what they were about to hear. The questions that were intended to discriminate did so, many students understood enough, and felt confident enough, to attempt the whole paper but there were blank answers for the whole or parts of questions 6, 7 and 9 (open ended questions in English). There were some students who were unable to cope with the demands of the paper - the increase in difficulty as they progressed through led some to give up. These students would have possibly benefited from taking the Foundation rather than the Higher paper.

Comments on individual questions.

Questions 1-4 are overlap questions found on both the 1F and 1H papers and included the two questions in Russian. At Higher level, performance on these questions was generally better, but errors made were similar to those on the Foundation level paper.

Questions 1 and 2 were in the target language. Students were generally more successful in answering Question 1, with 1 (a) and (d) being the most commonly correct and 1 (e) being the most challenging. A surprising number of students (at both Foundation and Higher), who seemed to have understood the rubric, entered a word for answer 1 (e) which did not appear in the box. The word "ветеринаром" appeared frequently. Many were unable to use linguistic clues or context to arrive at the correct answer. Question 2 proved challenging for all but the most successful students. This task required students to process what they heard and match what they heard with a defining adjective, eg 2 (a), the best fit from the list of adjectives on the list given, having heard, "очень смешная, "никогда не грустная" and "всё время улыбается ", would be, " весёлая ". A number of students had clearly not understood the rubric for these two questions and attempted to answer either with words outside the choices they were given or in English.

Question 3 proved difficult for some students, parts 3 (iii) and 3 (iv) were the most accessible. Parts 3(i) and 3(ii) relied on understanding inference. This multiple choice question required careful listening to identify correct and incorrect choices for each part of the question and also the ability to process information.

Question 4 included two inference questions. More successful students picked out the cognates or near cognates "группы", "американцев" and "сувениры" as clues to D - Tourism. G - Celebrations was the least accessible answer.

Question 5 was multiple choice and was generally well done by students who listened to the whole passage. Students need to be aware that at this level, more than one choice will be heard, and that ticking an answer because they recognise a word will lead them to incorrect answers. In Question 5(i) some students failed to recognise or understand, "ещё быстрее" to indicate that going by bus was a better option. Part (iii) required students to deduce the answer from a list of typical Russian dishes they were given "борщ, пельмени, вкусные блины..." to guide them to answer D - "typically Russian".

Question 8 was also multiple choice, parts a(i), b(i) and b(ii) proved more accessible. Again, students needed to deduce the correct answers from what they heard. In Question 8b(ii), students needed to link "найти себе спонсора.... на будущее", with the concept of Artyom furthering his career. Similarly, inference had to be drawn from "по моему мнению" to guide the student to the fact that Artyom was confident - 8a (iii) and that "она (музыка) делает наш мир лучше" implies music can benefit everyone - 8b (iii).

Question 10 was testing students at Grade 9, therefore going beyond the A* equivalent. Students can therefore expect the linguistic content and level of vocabulary - including words which are not on the vocabulary list - to be more sophisticated and challenging than in previous tests. The emphasis is on drawing inference from a relatively long extract and students are advised not to approach this question as a translation exercise. The most successful students were those who grasped the significance of "Все получают хорошие и плохие оценки - даже я." for guidance towards answer A in Question 10 (i). "У неё есть любимчики" was an extra clue to Vadim's teacher speaking "не по теме" implying unprofessional behaviour. In Question 10 (i), A was the most common correct answer and in Question 10 (b) it was B, where "Твоя жизнь, твоё будущее" steered a large number of students towards the correct answer. Given the level of difficulty demanded of a Grade 9 question, students coped well.

As always, the open-ended questions requiring answers in English proved a good discriminator. There were some excellent performances from more successful students on these questions but they proved difficult for less successful students. Students' responses often indicated they had understood the gist of the extracts, although lack of attention to detail cost students marks. Only the most successful students were able to supply the detail and accuracy required at this level.

The incline in difficulty was evident - the majority of students attempted and scored on Question 6, but in Question 7 and Question 9 there were more blank spaces and some students failed to score. Where students did not understand the extract, many either looked for single lexical items that might fit the question or came up with answers that weren't in the extract. Some common items of vocabulary were not known or confused with other words. It should be borne in mind that Question 7 targets Grade 7 and Question 9 Grades 8/9, however, all students should be encouraged to attempt all questions. They should attempt, insofar as it is reasonable to do so, to provide plausible answers to the questions set.

In Question 6 (a) many students understood that this was the first meeting of its kind in a Russian school. In 6 (b) students were given credit if they conveyed that the gifts were shown or displayed to the wider school community. There were

some instances of the question having been misread, where students stated what kind of gifts had been brought. Question 6 (c) allowed many students to score one mark, but only the most successful conveyed that someone other than the Russian children cared about the future of tigers. 6 (d) required students to imply going to or visiting China - living in or working in were too far removed from "поехать в Китай". The least successful students did not register the reference to China for this question and assumed Volodya wanted to work on environmental issues.

Question 7 had a number of familiar topics at its root, but lack of attention to detail and lack of precision again cost students marks. For example, in (c) some students did not grasp the use of negation, "не всегда" and "не так, чтобы" and assumed he had wanted to work in theatre. Others assumed he had wanted to be a languages teacher. A surprising number of students seemed not to recognise the word "родился", even backed up by "в 1979 году" in (a), and offered a range of tenuous links between Igor' and Germany. 7 (b) was well answered, as was 7 (d). For 7 (e) some students did not register that the key word in the question was "How" and answered that he went on to work in a theatre or in Moscow.

In Question 9, part (b) proved more demanding than part (a), as only the most successful students paid enough attention to detail to score both marks on a two-mark question. The text was also relatively long. The text contained a number of cognates and semi cognates - "актёры", "популярного", "телевизионного сериала", "клиниках", "операция", "нормальную", and so on. There were also many familiar items of vocabulary which were perhaps being used in an unfamiliar context. In part (a) (ii) a number of students did not focus in on "за границей" and confused "клиниках", suggesting the children were "clinically ill". "Четырнадцатилетняя" posed few problems in part (a) (iii) and (a) (iv) was also well answered. In Part (b) students needed to pay great attention to detail and ensure the answers they gave were logical. In (b) (i) a pleasing number of students answered that the event had been sold out (as opposed to having sold many tickets) but could not gain the second mark because they merely stated tickets were expensive, instead of linking the two pieces of information in a sensible way with "but", "in spite of", "although" and so on. The idea that we know the event was popular because the tickets were expensive does not really make sense. In 9 (b) (ii) many students understood that the celebrities were not how they had expected, for which they were awarded one mark. However, they failed to develop this idea and explain that bad characters were actually nice people. 9 (b) (iii) was well answered, with many students understanding the semi-cognates, "автографов" and "фотосессией".

For this paper, students need to:

- carefully read the questions
- be able to understand the questions in Russian and look for linguistic clues
- recognise familiar language in unfamiliar contexts
- listen to the whole rather than focus in on individual items of vocabulary
- recognise the use of negation
- recognise the use of tenses and time indicators
- pay attention to detail, give full rather than partial answers
- have a sound knowledge of vocabulary
- express themselves clearly and unambiguously when writing in English and relate their answers to what is heard in the extract
- apply logic
- read over and correct their answers