

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCSE

GCSE Russian (1241)

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1241 Paper 1 Listening and Responding Examiner's report

Questions 1-5 / 6-10 These questions posed very few problems for the vast majority of candidates

Question 11 Responses to this question were variable and wherever possible credit was given to candidates in spite of some poor spelling. A number of candidates did not understand the question in part (iv) and opted for **дорогой** as opposed to **белый**. The most consistently well answered question was part (v) where candidates displayed a sound knowledge of numbers.

Question 12 This proved a challenging question with few candidates outside the range for which it was intended picking up marks. Correct answers to (iv) and (v) appeared to cause the most difficulty.

Questions 13-15 These questions were generally well answered but a surprising number of candidates across the range appeared not to know the word **сыр** (question 14)

Question 16 This was generally well answered but a number of candidates failed to pick up the inference that Alyosha's brother was **хороший** from the words **добрый** and **весёлый** in the text. Similarly a number of candidates were unable to link **в августе** in the text with **летом** in the list of possible answers.

Question 17 A very challenging question, the combination of the amount of information required and the speed at which it was delivered posed problems for all but the best candidates. Answers to parts (i) and (vi) proved to be the most accessible.

Questions 18-19 Although mostly well answered, a number of candidates appeared not to know the word **душ**.

Question 20 A large number of candidates appeared not to know the phrase **обмен валюты**.

Question 21 Once again, a small number of candidates could not be awarded any marks for this question as they answered in Russian.

- a) A number of candidates were mistaken in thinking the film was released today as the first word of the text was **сегодня**
- b) The majority of candidates who offered an answer did so correctly
- c) There were a number of possible correct answers for this question, the most popular referring to Novikov being tall with blue eyes.
- d) A number of candidates appeared not to know the word **солдат**
- d) A pleasing number of candidates understood that the film was most likely to be seen by young people (i) and were able to give a full answer as to the reason why (ii).
- e) A large number of candidates understood that the film had won a prize at a film festival but the word **очередь** was frequently missed.

As in previous years, some candidates reduced their chances of picking up marks by not attempting the whole paper. Candidates should be encouraged to have an educated guess when all else fails. With particular reference to question 21, candidates should read the questions carefully (underlining key words in the question is often a good idea) as marks were sometimes thrown away by answers being inappropriate to the question.

1241 Paper 2 Speaking Examiner's report

Overall, this year's examination team was most pleased to note a generally high level of candidate proficiency in the speaking exam and very much enjoyed listening to enthusiastic and well prepared candidates. The majority of candidates were effectively and sympathetically guided through the exam and were given plenty of opportunities to employ a range of tenses and to express and justify their opinions. It is pleasing that both candidates and teacher-examiners seemed to be more aware than ever of the importance of the use of past, present and future tenses as well as of the expression and justification of a range of opinions and points of view, in terms of allowing access to the upper bands of the mark scheme. Examiners identified the best teacher examiners as being those who allowed their candidates time to expand and develop their answers, while being ready with structured questions to avoid the production of a monologue. Equally, the best teacher examiners re-phrased questions when candidates were struggling or unsure, or simply moved on swiftly to a different question. Repeating the same question or ploughing on with an obviously tricky topic is rarely in the interest of the candidate.

It is worth noting that even weaker candidates, when well prepared, can usually produce phrases in the three required time frames, while this year's most able candidates were most impressive in their production of a wide range of tenses and grammatical structures. Aspect continues to trouble all but the very best candidates.

'At Home and Abroad' was the most popular topic this year, presumably for the easy opportunities it affords for a range of tenses. Next in popularity were 'Education, Training and Employment' and 'House, Home and Daily Routine', quite possibly for the same reasons. Many candidates talked about the importance of exercise and a healthy diet. There was also some pleasing vocabulary on show as well as some unusual topics; examiners are always pleased to hear something out of the ordinary and this tends to make a candidate stand out.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first topic (chosen in advance by the candidate) was generally very well done, although some weaker candidates were allowed to present their topic for well over the prescribed 1 minute maximum. Centres are very much encouraged to allow their candidates to introduce their topic, for this often serves to settle nerves before the questions begin, but it must be emphasised that going beyond the 1 minute limit will not advantage candidates. On the contrary, candidates can only access the higher marks by responding to a 'wide range' of question types. In addition, centres should note that the total time for the exam - **MAXIMUM 12 MINUTES** - should be split evenly across the three topics. Candidates are very unlikely to be able to access the highest marks if this is not the case. Equally, candidates are very unlikely to benefit from an exam that goes beyond the maximum permitted time. In most cases, this serves only to make candidates tire and flag. Teacher examiners are strongly encouraged to use a stop watch to monitor the timing of their exams.

A significant number of native speaker examiners were once again guilty of not realising the importance of 'ticking the boxes' insofar as the requirements of the mark scheme are concerned. Consequently, a number of candidates (both learner and native speaker) were disadvantaged by, for example, not being given the opportunity to use the required range of time frames. Learner centres tended, generally speaking, to be rather better organised than those with native speaker candidates, but the importance to any centre of the teacher examiner familiarising themselves with the procedures laid out in the handbook cannot be overstated. This

is especially true of centres who do not have a Russian teacher and who invite an outsider to conduct their oral exams.

Far too many centres (mostly those with only 1 or 2 candidates) failed to complete and send an LT3 form with their candidates' materials. This form can be downloaded from the Edexcel website and is required for every candidate. A huge amount of examiner time was wasted this year either chasing centres for missing LT3s or filling them in on centres' behalf. Centres are also reminded of the importance of labelling both the cassette and the box and of rewinding the cassette to the beginning of side A. A number of centres sent in blank cassettes this year: it is important to check that candidates have been successfully recorded before submitting the materials. One or two centres chose to record their candidates onto CD this year; this was appreciated by the examiners. Centres are also reminded of the importance of ensuring that background noise is kept to a minimum while recording is taking place, as well as of the Edexcel stipulation that pausing the tape during a candidate's examination is strictly forbidden.

Finally, the examiners would like to thank the vast majority of centres and teachers for conducting the exam sympathetically and according to the instructions in the handbook, as well as for completing their administration effectively and accurately.

1241 Paper 3 Reading and Responding Examiner's report

Questions 1 and 2 were accessible to the vast majority of candidates. However it was surprising that many did not know either **булочная** or **мороженое** in Q2.

Question 3. Candidates were required to extract detail and meaning from the text and this proved to be a good test for those aiming at grade C and above.

Question 4 was well answered and caused few problems.

Question 5 was attempted by almost all candidates which was very pleasing. Even some of the weakest managed to gain marks by recognising **суп** or **продукты**. Candidates are clearly being well prepared for this type of question.

Question 6 was well answered.

Question 7. Candidates were asked to extract meaning from complex and sometimes unfamiliar language, which proved difficult, but it was pleasing to see that almost all candidates attempted it and many of the most able did very well.

Question 8. Generally this was well answered, but many lost marks on (iii) by answering **дискотека** instead of **ресторан**. Candidates should be encouraged to read the **whole** stimulus carefully.

Question 9 was again the most challenging question. Candidates were asked to draw conclusions from sometimes unfamiliar language. On the whole this question was tackled well by the most able candidates and many weaker ones gained marks too. Candidates should be encouraged to include all the details required and to read the questions carefully. Several misread **when** for **why** etc.

Some native speaker candidates answered in Russian and so unfortunately gained no marks and other candidates lost marks through poor or illegible handwriting.

- (i) There was some confusion from certain candidates who answered **yes** and had clearly not read the question properly.
- (ii) **месяц** was not known by many candidates, who guessed at days or years etc.
- (iii) **fell on the grass** was not accepted. Again there were many guesses here at **knocked down** or **mugging**. **Молня** was not universally understood.
- (iv) Surprisingly **милиционер** was not well known with many guessing at millionaire or soldier. There was also confusion between **девушка** and **дедушка** with candidates answering that she was taken to hospital by her grandfather.
- (v) Many candidates answered well gaining both marks, but a significant number either did not know **тётя** or confused it with **дядя**. Some candidates also understood **почти** to mean post office.
- (vi) The most able candidates answered this well gained all three marks, but some of the weaker candidates confused 12 and 20 or did not know **карман**.

On the whole candidates were well prepared and answered the paper well. A minority were let down by either poor English or poor handwriting.

1241 Paper 4 Writing Examiner's report

Question 1:

The question allowed a reasonably wide range of lexical items therefore few candidates struggled to fill the grid. Some candidates selected clothing as items they would buy for a party. Very rarely were answers not accepted although there were frequent misspellings of some words such as **бутерброд**, **шашлык** and **подарки**. Some candidates were creative with the things which they might bring to a party, although the majority of answers were food items or **компактные диски / музыкальные диски**. One student ran out of words and put "a table" in English! Candidates must be reminded that they will not be credited with any marks for copying the example.

Question 2:

This question was done well and there was evidence of pupils being taught extremely well, with vocabulary and structures comfortable to the task and many nice examples of correct case endings. The use of adjectives to describe the new house was at times rather limited - big and good being the favourites. As these adjectives are so popular, it would be nice to see them being spelled correctly.

The bullet points did overlap to some degree and some candidates saw this a challenge to write as few words as possible which may be dangerous policy, (location merged with proximity to school and sometimes reason for like/dislike e.g. I like my house because it is situated not far from my school).

The vast majority of candidates were able to list some rooms in the house and to give an opinion regarding their new home. Very few candidates did not justify their like/dislike but many more relied on adjectives already employed such as big/ good.

A large number of candidates scored full marks on this question and many wrote impressive, lengthy answers. Very few candidates misunderstood the question although some did not mention exactly which rooms they have in their new house which lost them marks. However, some candidates did not address the first bullet point and describe their new home and very often in the 2nd bullet point there was quite a lot of confusion between **гостиная** and **гостиница**.

Question 3:

Out of the four bullet points, candidates managed to address the 2nd and 4th most accurately.

With the first bullet point some candidates had difficulty expressing how much money they received, some did not know the word for 'pound' and others took **денег** from the Russian text and thought this was a unit of currency as opposed to the general word for money. Some students kept writing "I get 5 dengi" or "pounds" but in Cyrillic. In the second bullet point candidates managed to find ways around household chores if they had forgotten the vocabulary and on the whole answered this part well.

In the third bullet point candidates were quite secure in forming the past tense but often forgot to describe what they bought.

Finally candidates managed to say if they intended working in the summer but the formation of the future tense was the least secure of the three. A common error was **я буду работаю**. It was encouraging to see a variety of structures which can be used to denote future time - **я собираюсь**, **я хочу** and **я буду** were all accepted.

It was interesting to read about how much pocket money young people receive and in such a wide range of currencies! It was encouraging to read how many students do help at home (or say they do). Washing the dishes is popular as too is helping or working in the garden. Many candidates were adamant that they would not be working in the summer because they had to relax!! Many candidates wrote interesting and

accurate pieces about their pocket money. The stimulus was well used and some answers gave full descriptions and were very pleasing to read.

Question 4a:

This was the more popular option of 4a and 4b, the security of the bullet points helping many candidates. Many excellent answers were offered which went beyond the minimum expectation in a variety of ways. A number of candidates did not understand exactly the requirements of the question and wrote a general essay on sport - and thus lost marks for not addressing the fact that this was a celebration of the sport club's 30th anniversary. A number did not recognise that the celebratory event that they had to describe had already happened and so they needed to use the past tense. It would be useful for centres to continue training their candidates to recognise the tense required for each bullet point in this type of questions.

The first bullet point was generally very well handled. There were some very convincing pieces to address the final bullet point on why people should do sport, tackling aspects of a healthy lifestyle. Even many weaker candidates were encouraged to write good sentences here. An example might be **по-моему надо заниматься спортом, потому что это можно играть с друзьями** - which shows good use of the stimulus and initiative in dealing with the question using words / phrases which the candidate did know. It shows that teachers are really encouraging all candidates to try to address all of the bullet points in question 4.

Weaker students wrote just about sport and where they play it. Unfortunately, even native speakers wrote "I play football/tennis etc without the preposition. Quite common was the incorrect phrase **Я делаю спорт**. Overall, the first bullet point was well answered by a wide range of candidates and is obviously a popular topic at GCSE level as pupils could write about. Plenty of parties were the main celebration for the 30th birthday of the club with candidates taking the chance to write about what they ate and drank.

The majority of candidates used some very good vocabulary and structures. Particularly impressive was the use of constructions involving **который, чтобы, однако, хотя, поэтому** and other connectives. Many candidates showed an ability to use some quite complicated grammatical constructions as well. There were examples of learner candidates using the conditional, compound conjunctions, gerunds and correct case forms after various prepositions and verbs.

Many candidates had difficulty understanding the requirements for this question, the biggest hurdle seeming to be the understanding of the word **праздник**. Most candidates addressed the first bullet point well but some then misunderstood the task by writing a general essay about their sporting interests. Some also described their own birthday and not that of the club.

A number of students used the English words "fit" and "party" spelt in Cyrillic assuming that they are common Russian words. A few used the incorrect expressions **играть спорт, оранжевый сок**.

Candidates were well informed about why one should get involved with sport, reasons included: it's good for your health, it's fun, it stops you becoming fat, you can meet new friends and it helps with other aspects of your life, for example, not smoking and having a healthy diet.

Question 4b:

Some candidates did extremely well with it but some, regardless of their linguistic ability, did not manage to address each part of the question (what I know about this person and why I like them) which was a shame. Many candidates did not actually know enough about their chosen celebrity to write enough about them and must be reminded that they can invent material to “showcase” their language. Many struggled with consistent use of the third person. It did allow some weaker candidates to put a few sentences together and score some points. It may be worth telling candidates that it is never a good idea to write “and this is all I know” even if the question invites it!

There were many excellent answers to this question and a number of learner candidates wrote particularly passionate pieces about a famous person whom they admire. The examiners did not always know the famous person being described, but the most effective answers which often scored full marks for communication enabled the reader to picture the person and understand the writer’s enthusiasm for their work. It was encouraging for candidates to be able to write pieces which clearly reflect real interests or passions which they have. The majority had a wide range of structures at their disposal which they used to convey their message effectively. Many have been trained to ensure that they include the past, present and future tenses in their answers to unstructured questions such as this and this is to be encouraged. Occasionally, answers did not seem to offer very much actual information about the famous person and this meant that they were not as successful. Some candidates also did not give clear reasons why they like the person, as it was indicated they needed to in the stimulus. There were some very successful answers written by weaker candidates, although these tended to be repetitious.

The majority of candidates used some very good vocabulary and structures. Many candidates showed an ability to use some quite complicated grammatical constructions as well. There were examples of learner candidates using the conditional, compound conjunctions, gerunds and correct case forms after various prepositions and verbs. This was very encouraging.

Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt, Orlando Bloom were very popular with the girls. Britney Spears was described as a good mother (!) and Angelina Jolie was a favourite with the boys. It was nice that some of the students went for a Russian person: Putin, Sasha Pivovarova, MakSim and Sergei Bezrukov.

There has been an increase in recent years in the number of candidates who have some knowledge of Russian but whose main language is another Slavonic language. Their written work is often highly influenced by these languages and accuracy suffers as a result. Indeed, a small number of answers this year were written entirely in Polish and had no recognisable Cyrillic letters - they could gain no credit. Centres could perhaps be encouraged to ensure that candidates have a sufficient grasp of written Russian to enable them to perform at their best in this paper.

The examiners enjoyed marking this year’s work and congratulate centres on training their students well.

Statistics

Paper 01 - Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Boundary Mark	50	37	32	27	23	19	16	13	10	0

Paper 02 - Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Boundary Mark	50	19	16	13	10	8	5	5	4	0

Paper 03 - Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Boundary Mark	50	37	32	27	22	19	16	14	12	0

Paper 04 - Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Boundary Mark	50	46	38	30	22	18	14	11	8	0

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	81	69	57	45	38	31	25	19	0

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