

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE Classical Arabic
(4CA0) Paper 1

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The following points caused difficulty, but the most successful candidates were able to deal with them in a coherent way, i.e. they were able to convey meanings clearly and accurately in either English or Arabic, according to the demands of the question.

For the grammar questions 3 and 5, successful candidates were able to identify and understand the syntax of sentences in order to vocalise the Arabic correctly, or, additionally with Q5, they could translate into Arabic using correct grammar.

Question 1

Many candidates had difficulty with the following expressions in the beginning of the passage:

Yukanna Aba al-Agharr
Fi sikkat Bani Mazin
Sharibta hamidan khabithan hatta idha mannatka nafsuka al-amani
Wa qulta: atruq diyar Bani Amr

Later in the passage, the following expressions proved difficult:

Yaltaqi fihi al-hayyan Amr and Handhala wa yaji' a'wan bi'adad al-hasa
Idha sami' al-kalam atraq wa idha sakata wathab

Question 2

The following phrases from the first paragraph generally caused difficulty, but good candidates dealt with them effectively:

Yaqta' al-tariq
Mudtarab alkhata
Lawnan min alwan al-ta'am allati kanat yuddakhar li-yatabalagh biha

From the second paragraph:

Fa-kana idhan yara al-khair
Yu'thir al-salama
Al-kuttab
Wa qad arda hajatahu ila al-la'ib
Qassan 'ala ummihi ma ahabba an yaqussu 'alaiha
Lazimahu madian nahwa al-janub
balagh makanan bi-ainihi
hanut al-shaikh

Question 3

Better candidates were able to distinguish between different parts of the sentence, and knew the correct vowels for word-endings which change according to Arabic morphology.

Weaker candidates, in varying degrees, were unable to see the difference between subject and object, and could not spot words in the genitive case. They also were uncertain about the vowelling of words in the construct state.

Question 4

This question was mostly quite well done, especially paragraph 2. Weaker candidates found some difficulty with the following expressions:

The headmaster appointed a teaching assistant
A young man who was desperate
A number of different craftsmen
Learn at least one trade well
Naturally upset with him
Began to take little interest in him
Earned their own living

Question 5

The translation of the sentences was fairly good. Even weaker candidates usually achieved the minimum mark of 1 from 3 for each sentence. What distinguished successful candidates from the less successful was their vowelling of word endings, choice of vocabulary, and confident use of the grammar required for the correct answers to each question.

In 5(a), weaker students often forgot the use of singular verb before plural subject.

In (b), there was some difficulty with omission of relative particle after indefinite noun, and sometimes with use of present tense after the conjunction 'qabla an'.

(c) was difficult for students who were uncertain how many brothers Khalid had. The correct case for abahum was also missed by the weaker candidates

(d) Some students missed out the expression for 'As for', or failed to use the 'fa' particle before the predicate. The spelling of bi-but' proved difficult.

(e) Many candidates avoided using the better stylistic method of rendering the exclamation and the relative into Arabic, but this could not prevent them from scoring on this question.

(f) There was a persistent tendency to use 'ajuza' for 'old lady' when 'ajuz' was sufficient. Many students spelt 'alin' incorrectly.

(g) The word 'colleague' proved tricky, as did the translation of 'recently'. A surprising number of candidates used the colloquial 'mada' instead of 'amda' to translate 'spent', while some did not know 'archaeological'. 'Make a number' was often not well-translated.

(h) This question was very poorly done. Some candidates may have recognised and used the feminine plural in the first part of the sentence, but failed to realize that the word 'girls' was also the subject of the second part. Many students appeared not to know about the use of feminine singular to speak about plural inanimate objects.

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