

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

## Summer 2010

O Level

### O Level Arabic (7603) Paper 1

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## Paper 1

### Question One

On the whole, candidates translated the meaning of the text fairly accurately, though certain sentences and expressions posed difficulties. In the first paragraph, the phrase *min fulaan 'aamilihi* was mistranslated by many candidates as 'his work' instead of 'governor' as is used in a classical sense. Some candidates also translated *rasoolan* as 'prophet' as opposed to 'a messenger'. In the fourth paragraph, only a few candidates managed to translate the phrase *yaa ghulaam 'alayya bisiraaj* correctly. In the last paragraph, the majority of candidates translated the phrase *fakaanat tilka ash-sham'atu tudee'u bayna yadayya* literally as 'the candle that was lit between my hands' rather than as 'the candle that was lit before me/in front of me'. Furthermore, the word *fateela*, which means 'wick' or 'taper' was not rendered correctly by most.

### Question Two

Generally, students made a valiant attempt to translate the whole of the passage with few omissions. In paragraph one, certain words and expressions were particularly challenging, such as *naqattuhu ath-thamana*, which many misunderstood to mean 'I criticised' rather than 'I paid'. Surprisingly, despite the reference in the text to fish, some candidates opted for a literal translation of *sayyaad* as 'hunter' instead of 'fisherman', which would have been more appropriate in this context. Candidates found the last sentence in paragraph two and the main body of paragraph three difficult to phrase in coherent English. Among the phrases and expressions that the candidates found hard to translate in the last paragraph were: *yatakhallaluhu sukoonut-tabeeyati*, *wahudoohuha*, *fa'idhaa akhadhtu minhu kifaafa yawmee*, *fa'idhaa adbaran-nahaaru* and *watabush-shu fee wajhi zawjatee*.

Further general comments applicable to both question one and question two include the following:

- Students should be taught a wider range of connectives such as 'moreover', 'nevertheless' and 'however' to improve the fluidity of their translation. Many rely too heavily on using 'and' and 'so' repeatedly at the beginning of sentences.
- Students should be taught to use speech marks when rendering direct speech into English. They should also be asked to avoid turning direct speech into reported speech, active verbs into passive verbs, or changing the subject of the verb unnecessarily.
- Students need to understand that it is not acceptable in a translation exercise to summarise or paraphrase sentences unduly. Marks would be lost if the translation fails to reflect a precise rendition of the original Arabic text.

### Question Three

In spite of an example being given on the exam paper of how to go about this exercise correctly, many students are still failing to write every single vowel mark and orthographic sign. This exercise is designed to test students' knowledge of Arabic grammar in detail so they should be prepared for the task accordingly. Particular weaknesses thrown up by this exercise included:

- lack of knowledge of the genitive and the correct placement of the kasra (*harf ul-jarr*) following prepositions or in *idafa* constructions
- lack of understanding of when to apply a *shadda* after the definite article
- incorrect rendition of *tanween fatha* - many candidates wrote an additional, unnecessary fatha on the letter before the *tanween*. Ideally, the two fathas should be placed on the letter before the final alif of convention, and not on the alif itself.
- lack of agreement of adjectives in terms of gender, number and case ending (*as-sifa wa'l-mawsuf*)

### Question Four

By and large, candidates showed a good understanding of the passage and were able to decode it correctly. Apart from certain aspects of vocabulary that posed some difficulties, their encoding of the text was not far off the mark. The phrase 'I quickly searched my conscience' posed a problem to many candidates.

The word 'lesson' in the phrase 'I have a very important lesson for you today' was taken to mean 'lesson' as in a school subject as opposed to a moral lesson.

A significant number of candidates could not translate the phrase 'Her face was flushed'.

Many candidates failed to understand the idiom 'poke their noses everywhere' and translated it very literally, interpreting it as the boys putting their fingers in their noses all over the place.

Surprisingly, many candidates failed to translate the word 'eight' correctly into Arabic and either wrote it as a digit or, in writing it as a word, rendered it incorrectly.

### Question Five

On the whole, question five was handled well and most sentences were, by and large, rendered into Arabic correctly.

Sentences (d) and (f) proved the most problematic. In (d), the phrase 'gifted with the ability to present ...' caused the most difficulties and in (f), candidates struggled with the phrase 'and this was the first time that I witnessed a traditional Arab wedding reception.'

Again, not knowing how to write out Arabic numbers as words let many candidates down in (h). 'One hundred and ninety-five centimetres' caused problems.

### **General comments**

Further general comments applicable to questions three, four and five are as follows:

Weakness in spelling, such as mixing up similar sounding Arabic letters or using colloquial pronunciations of words.

It would appear that the ability of students to write sentences with the correct verb conjugations needs to be developed. I would strongly recommend that the following areas of grammar be targeted in preparing students for this paper:

- Verb conjugation
- The rules governing Sun and Moon letters
- Attached pronouns
- Demonstrative pronouns
- Formulation of letters/handwriting

## Grade Boundaries

Overall Mark boundaries

| Max Mark | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|
| 100      | 70 | 54 | 39 | 34 | 24 |

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