

GCE O Level

Edexcel GCE O Level

Modern Greek (7615)

Summer 2006

Examiners' Report

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1. Subject Report

7615 MODERN GREEK, JUNE 2006

A substantial proportion of this year's candidates produced competent translations, exhibiting a high level of linguistic skill and writing dexterity. Responses to the essay questions were almost always fluent but occasionally not appropriate or pertinent enough, especially in relation to 3(a) and 3 (c).

There was a very small number of responses that displayed minimal knowledge of English and therefore left a significant part of the exam paper unanswered. As the O level in Modern Greek is examined through the medium of English and 60% of the final mark is reserved for translation, fluency in Modern Greek ought to be accompanied by sufficient knowledge of English, in order for the candidate to achieve a satisfactory grade.

Comments on individual questions are as follows:

Questions 1(a) and (b)

A large number of answers showed good communication skills, evidence of fluency and satisfactory awareness of grammar and syntax. This year's translations followed on the pattern of improvement established in the last few years, in terms of their structural awareness and sensitivity towards grammatical issues (word order in particular). Although there were isolated instances of literal renditions of idiomatic expressions, many answers were impressive in terms of communicative efficiency as well as linguistic achievement. Candidates were mostly accurate in the second parts of questions (a) and (b), handling challenges of vocabulary and grammar efficiently. Instances of intrusive errors and examples of erroneous transfer of meaning and inaccurate use of language are as follows:

(a)

- «Γεννήθηκα» was sometimes rendered as “I borned” instead of “I was born”
- «δημόσιο σχολείο» was often mistaken for a “primary school” instead of “state school”.
- The cognate noun «φύση» was frequently rendered as “physics” and not as “nature”
- The phrase «... δεν μου άρεσαν τα παιδιά» proved confusing, as some students, influenced by the way the Greek verb «αρέσει» is formed, ended up writing “children didn't like me”, instead of “...I didn't like children”
- «κάθε άλλο» was often rendered literally as “every other”. Some candidates aware of nuance and idiom offered competent responses such as, “on the contrary”, “quite the opposite” or paraphrased and rendered the meaning of the expression correctly with sentences such as, “I liked them very much”.
- Few candidates were aware of the adjective “patient” but not the noun “patience” and rendered «υπομονής» inaccurately, as “patient”.

(b)

There were very few instances of patterns of grammatical and lexical inaccuracies in question 1(b). Most candidates used apt vocabulary with little evidence of misunderstanding and detail glossed over. An obvious challenge related to the word

«συνταξιούχοι», which was either left out, or explained, rather than translated, as: “people who are over sixty and don’t work but receive money from the government”. Candidates who exhibit such ingenuity in rendering meaning, even though they are not, strictly speaking, translating, are rewarded nevertheless. A small number of candidates came up with the correct translation “pensioners” or “people who are retired”. Occasional evidence of mother tongue interference related to the verb «περιμένουν», which in English has to be accompanied by the preposition “for”. Therefore, the correct translation would be “they wait for time to pass” and not “they wait time to pass”

Question 2

Answers to question 2 ranged from satisfactory to excellent. There were a few instances of wrong use of vocabulary, but generally the language communicated well and grammatical lapses were rare. The challenges that confronted a small number of candidates were mainly restricted to vocabulary and vary occasionally affected the communicative efficiency of the translations seriously.

Examples of structures and vocabulary that posed a challenge to the less able candidates concerned the following:

- “was not entitled” was sometimes rendered as «δεν ήταν τιτλούχος», instead of «δεν δικαιούταν»
- the noun “company” was often translated as «παρέα», which may have been appropriate in a different context but not in this one, as it refers to “an insurance company”, i.e. «ασφαλιστική εταιρεία»
- “I asked for advice” was another example of a literal translation that does not take into account the particular rules of syntax that apply to verbs in the target and the source language. The Greek verb «ζητώ», unlike the English verb “I ask”, does not require the preposition “for” and cannot be translated as «ζήτησα για».
- A surprisingly large number of candidates failed to decline the adjective «ασφαλής» correctly.

Question 3

Many candidates wrote with satisfactory variety and gave fluent and confident accounts and descriptions of their chosen topics. The most popular essays proved to be 3(d), on the proposed ban of smoking in public and 3 (c), about an unforgettable trip abroad. A surprisingly large number of candidates, however, failed to address the requirements of this last question, which specifically stated that the description ought to focus on a trip abroad and the distinguishing characteristics of the experience of a foreign country. An unfortunate pattern evolved, whereby candidates would devote the entire body of their essay on irrelevant and mundane preparations for their trip, on generalisations about a foreign city, which was not even mentioned by name or, rarely, on weekend excursions to a nearby seaside village, which was not even abroad. Another question where understanding of what was required was limited related to 3(a), which invited candidates to discuss the role that voluntary service plays in their lives. Many candidates understood the meaning of voluntary service but failed to explain how it affects or influences their lives. Others misunderstood the question completely and instead wrote about giving money to charity organisations.

This unfortunate misreading of the rubric resulted in substantial irrelevance and significant omissions, regarding the pertinence of some answers. This would have been easily avoided, had candidates paid the necessary attention to the phrasing of the questions. Moreover, a significant number of answers did not pay enough attention to an orderly and clear presentation and displayed a rather hasty and superficial attitude towards neatness and clear writing or the conventions of the Greek alphabet. SMS type abbreviations and variations of the Greek letters according to some conventions of email transliterations are not appropriate for this examination. In general, answers that are covered in smudges, with whole paragraphs crossed out and looking like rough versions of an essay, rather than a final version, do not often do justice to the candidates' creativity, argument, or language skills.

On a positive note, the large majority of candidates were quite careful about sticking to the rubric and the word count requirement, hardly ever exceeding the appropriate wordage.

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