

Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE O Level

GCE O Level Modern Greek (7615)

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A substantial proportion of this year's candidates produced competent translations and confident essays, exhibiting a high level of language awareness and writing dexterity.

There was a very small number of responses, which displayed inadequate knowledge of English and could not address Q1a and Q1b, in a satisfactory manner. A worrying pattern was noticed with regard to presentation and the conventions of writing in Greek. A large number of candidates paid little attention to orderly and neat presentation of their work and produced almost illegible responses, with whole sentences crossed out, cross-referenced in other parts of their script, without any indication or written in the margins of the page (with extremely small letters). More importantly, the rules of the Greek accent system were often ignored and the position of the stress was rarely indicated or indicated with circles and asterisks, which are, by no means, acceptable. Some candidates often substituted Greek letters such as “υ” and “τ” with the English letters “u” and “t”, which again are not appropriate choices.

Comments on individual questions are as follows:

Questions 1(a) and (b)

Many candidates showed evidence of fluency and good awareness of grammar and syntax. Most students seemed to find Q1(a) easier to tackle, in terms of vocabulary and structural knowledge. Lexical challenges were mostly restricted to expressions rather than individual words. In fact, this year's candidates seemed quite accomplished with regard to vocabulary awareness, as there was hardly a single word that was left untranslated. Examples where phrases or expressions were not appropriately rendered into English include the following:

“μου ταίριαζε” was often translated as “matched me”, instead of “suited me”
“ας είναι καλά” was translated literally as “Let it be well”, instead of “God Bless” or an equivalent.

“It didn't make his heart”, instead of “He didn't have the heart”, in the translation of “Δεν του έκανε καρδιά”

Inappropriate choices of words were also evident in the translations of the following:

“Costume” was sometimes preferred over “uniform”, in the translation of “στολή” and “Βασίλευε” was rendered as “ruled”, instead of “reigned”.

With regard to grammar and syntax, there was some improvement, especially with regard to mother tongue interference. Some examples of inaccurate forms related mainly to the following two instances:

“I fly for more than twenty years”, instead of “I have been flying for over 20 years” and “lighted”, instead of “lit”

Question 2

Answers to Q2 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 did not affect the communicative efficiency of the translations seriously.

The most obvious lexical hurdle concerned the expression “ National Weather Service”, which was sometimes rendered inappropriately as “Καιρική Υπηρεσία” or “ Διεθνής Υπηρεσία Καιρού”. This, however, was not significant enough to obscure the communicative value of the passage.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote with satisfactory variety and gave fluent and confident accounts and descriptions of their chosen topics. The most popular essays proved to be the ones on “Life in the country is not attractive enough to young people” and “A film review”. Some candidates with insufficient knowledge of Greek mistook “επαρχία” for a “big city” and wrote largely irrelevant accounts.

There was a small number of candidates who wrote vivid and sometimes sensational accounts of an imaginary interview (mostly with pop idols), whereas high ability candidates opted for the essay topic relating to the presumed objectivity of the media. Some hasty readings of the rubric led to partially successful answers, especially in relation to Q3(b) and Q3(c), whereby candidates failed to gain high marks by omission. They either left out “πώς τη γιορτάζετε”, when they discussed a national holiday, or did not address the aspect of the media that relates to “πόσο αντικειμενική” .

Candidates were quite careful about sticking to the rubric and the word count requirement, but a substantial 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. 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.

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