

Examiners' Report January 2008

O Level

O Level Modern Greek (7615/01)

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General Comments

A large number of the candidates, who sat the January 2008 examination in Modern Greek, performed very well and provided good translations, both from English into Greek and vice versa. Question 3 provoked pertinent and interesting accounts and there was evidence of good language skills in most essays.

This time too, there was noticeable improvement regarding rubric and wordage restrictions, as the vast majority of candidates adhered to the rubric. The issue regarding application of the rules governing the stress system has continued to mar performance. Candidates are reminded that the position of the stress ought to be indicated, where necessary, with the appropriate diacritic. Circles and stars are not acceptable alternatives of the stress mark. Moreover, Greek letters ought to be rendered appropriately and not substituted by their equivalent Latin characters as, for example, “t” and “u” cannot replace the Greek characters “τ “ and “ υ“.

Candidates are also reminded that sloppiness, messy writing and carelessness regarding the presentation of their responses or inability to stay within the prescribed margins of the page, ultimately work to their disadvantage.

Comments on individual questions are as follows:

Questions 1(a) and 1(b)

Many answers showed evidence of fluency and satisfactory awareness of grammar and syntax. Q1(b) proved, by far, more popular as many found the subject matter easier to approach.

Many responses to Q1(a) showed fluent command of vocabulary and idiom, good language awareness and consistently good application of the grammatical system.

With regard to Vocabulary and expression, the following seemed to pose some difficulty.

- «συνηθίζουν να λένε», was very frequently rendered as “use to say”, which is incorrect. The more apt choices would have been “as they usually say/ call it”. Some students opted for “as they used to say”, which managed to convey the fact that we are talking about a convention/habit, even though the sentence is the wrong tense.
- «λιμάνι» was often translated as “lake”, instead of as “port” or “harbour”.
- «φυσιολογικά» an obvious cognate, was unfortunately translated as “physiologically”, instead of “as normal”.
- «δεν φαίνεται να έχει κανένα ενδιαφέρον», was occasionally translated using the adjective “interesting”, instead of the noun “interest” as, “the big festival/celebration does not seem to be of any interesting to them”
- «Βγάζουν τα παπούτσια τους», was sometimes rendered with the wrong phrasal verb, i.e. as “put off their shoes” or “lay off their shoes”, instead of “take off their shoes” or “remove their shoes”.

Even though many responses were not always entirely successful, they yielded results which, despite their awkwardness, betrayed that most candidates had control over the meaning of the passage.

With regard to Q1(b), the majority of responses were competent translations, with few grammatical inaccuracies and a variety of correctly used structures and vocabulary.

The few patterns relating to incorrect use of vocabulary or structures were with regard to the following:

- A mistake is something you “make” not “do”.
- «συνήθεια» was often translated as “use”.
- Conventions of word order were sometimes ignored; instead of the correct “sometimes the opposite is true” / “sometimes it is the other way round”, some candidates came up with “sometimes is true the opposite” / “sometimes happen the opposite”.

Question 2

Many candidates gained good marks in this section. They produced competent translations, with few grammatical inaccuracies. Despite evidence of occasional errors, the translations usually read well and communicated the sense of the source text correctly. The challenges which confronted a small number of candidates were mainly restricted to vocabulary and did not affect the communicative efficiency of the translations seriously.

Certain patterns relating to errors were as follows:

- The use of the conditional, to denote a past habit, sometimes escaped the candidates' attention. "Women would celebrate" refers to the past and should therefore be translated with an Imperfect «χόρευαν» or in another way that places the action firmly in the past.
- "popularity" sometimes yielded ...non existent nouns such as «δημοφιλικότητα», instead of, e.g. «δημοτικότητα»
- "Not wanting" was sometimes translated as «όχι θέλοντας», instead of «μη θέλοντας»
- "Made up" was occasionally translated as «ήταν χτισμένη», instead of «αποτελούταν» or even «είχε» or «περιελάμβανε».

Question 3

Candidates used a wide range of vocabulary and employed complex structures and idiom in order to respond to the question. There was an even distribution of candidate interest amongst the topics, with a slight preference for (d), and the noticeable pattern of candidates sticking to the prescribed word limit was welcome.

There were few lapses into irrelevance and the kind of digression that is evidence of a pre-learnt essay or careless reading of the rubric. This was more noticeable with Q3(a), which sometimes contained platitudes about the different kinds of love available to people and animals or offered general comments about the importance of love, which left out the particular aspect that the question entailed. The idea of "love beyond borders" was successfully taken up by a number of students who wrote pertinently about the possibility of love across religion, race, nationality, culture etc.

In certain cases, careless reading of the rubric in Q3(c) meant that students wrote about the improbability of ending up as castaways on a desert island, devoting very little room to what exactly they would have liked to have at their disposal. Candidates are reminded that the essay choices are there for them to choose, according to their interests or experience. It is really counter productive to go for an essay question, which one has no affinity with.

One observation which ought to be taken seriously by the candidates concerns the presentation of their work. Many candidates presented essays that were hardly legible, the writing not only being hard to read but also marked by smudges and asterisks and words being crossed out over and over again. It would be a courtesy to the examiners on the part of the candidates to take some extra care when writing this exam paper.

Statistics

Paper 01

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary mark	72	58	44	39	32

Notes

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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