

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

O Level

O Level Modern Greek (7615)

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Paper 1

General Comments

A good number of the candidates who sat the June 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 year, there were few responses that displayed minimal knowledge of English and as a result, left a significant part of the exam paper unanswered or handled inadequately. As the O level in Modern Greek is largely 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 candidates to achieve a satisfactory grade.

The trend of improvement, regarding adherence to rubric and wordage restrictions continued. Where candidates ignored the rules of the Greek alphabet and the conventions of the stress system they were penalized according to the provisions of the mark scheme. 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 ultimately work to their disadvantage.

Comments on individual questions:

Questions 1a and 1b

Regarding 1(a), many answers showed evidence of fluency and satisfactory awareness of grammar and syntax. Candidates, across abilities, did not seem to face any particular vocabulary hurdles, although words like “scrabble” and “backgammon” were rendered in a variety of spellings. «Γνωστό» was sometimes rendered as “famous”, which is close enough to “well-known”, but an inappropriate choice for a word which, in this context, essentially means “familiar”. Candidates are reminded of the importance of the particular context with regard to how meaning is affected and often changes from the established or more common one.

The last paragraph presented candidates with fewer challenges than the rest of the passage, although a small number of responses omitted it entirely. Occasionally, due to hasty reading of the last sentence, the preposition was left out and the sentence was inaccurately translated as “we forget our friends”. Some candidates came up with the impressive “sometimes we get carried away”, whereas others managed to render the meaning in a satisfactory, albeit not very concise, manner, e.g. “sometimes we have such good fun chatting with our friends, that we don’t look at the clock ...”. Such sentences were rewarded for their reasonable and satisfactory attempt at transfer of meaning.

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

Question 1b proved, by far, more popular and there were many instances of near perfect translations as well as translations that reached the higher bands of 7-10.

The most frequent patterns relating to errors were as follows:

(i)With regard to vocabulary, "memoir" or "memorial" instead of "memory" for «ανάμνηση».

(ii) In the sentence «φέρανε και προβλήματα», «και» was translated literally as “and”

(“they brought and problems”). In the particular context, however, it meant «επίσης» and ought to have been rendered as “they also brought problems”.

(iii) A surprising large number of candidates failed to transfer the meaning of Greek structure «αυτό δεν πολυάρεσε στον πατέρα της» to its equivalent in English and followed the unorthodox path of a kind of literal translation that followed the word order of the Greek sentence. As a result, there were many sentences that read “this did not like her father”, instead of “her father did not like this”.

Question 2

Most candidates gained high marks in this section. They produced competent translations and there were very few grammatical inaccuracies. Despite evidence of occasional errors, the translations usually read well and communicated the sense of the source text correctly. There were a few instances of literal translation again, «όχι όλοι συμφωνούν», and some 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 the translation of the words “gardening”, “walking” and “dancing”, which were inappropriately rendered with Greek participles, «κάνοντας κηπουρική», «περπατώντας», «χορεύοντας», which were then placed as subjects to a verb in the sentence «είναι μορφές άσκησης».

Question 3

Candidates used a wide range of vocabulary and employed complex structures and idiom in order to respond to the question. There was a preference for the topics concerning the challenges that young people face and the significance of the Olympic Games nowadays. Few candidates chose to write on the scenes they encounter when walking around their favourite city. Very often, those who did offered dry descriptions of a trip abroad and accounts of visits to museums, rather than focusing on the particular images and street scenes that comprise the profile of a city.

There was a very refreshing pattern of candidates sticking to the prescribed word limit and providing mostly pertinent and coherent accounts of their ideas and experience. There were very few lapses into irrelevance and the kind of digression that is evidence of a pre-learnt essay. Most candidates wrote with satisfactory variety and gave fluent and confident accounts and descriptions of their chosen topics. Occasionally, hasty reading of the rubric meant that, when it came to 3(a), candidates wrote a historical overview of the development of the Olympic Games, without tackling their significance, nowadays. With regard to 3(e), some responses described in unnecessary length but did not offer any critique or evaluation of films or plays.

One observation which ought to be taken very 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	70	56	43	38	30

Notes

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

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