

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Classical Arabic (4CA0)
Paper 01

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General comment:

When translating, candidates should aim to remain as closely as possible to the original text, while aiming at using the best possible English or Arabic in their answers. They should never change the ideas contained in the original. Some students think it is a good idea to include alternative answers in brackets, but they should be discouraged from doing this as they will lose marks.

Candidates should know that they have to cut up the English texts into sentences of varying lengths with the use of capital letters and full stops in the appropriate places. When they only use commas and no capital letters this makes their language difficult to decipher and results in them losing marks.

The following points were noted by examiners:

Question 1

Sentence 2. This was fairly easy to understand, but difficult to put into a good English. Marks were lost through poor use of English. Students should be taught to avoid translating the particle 'ف' at the beginning of sentences. Authentic English rarely uses 'so' at the start of a sentence and usually doesn't need it between sentences: to use it regularly in translations therefore counts as a mistake. Sometimes, as here, it is downright misleading to use 'so'.

Sentence 3. Few students recognised that the place known for hunting was in Persia. Classical texts are likely to have some reference to Persia, so candidates should be taught how to spot this.

Sentence 5. Many students did not know the meaning of 'غراب' in English. This is quite a common word in Classical Arabic and candidates ought to have come across it in their studies.

Sentence 6. Candidates are clearly confused by the similarity between 'إذ', 'إذا', and 'إذاً'. Their meanings are different, of course, and students should be taught how to differentiate between them. This sentence was poorly done in general because suitable English for describing the hunter was difficult to find, though the majority of candidates understood it. The majority of students kept to the typical Arabic construction, putting it into English as 'a man from the hunters': the typical English here was rarely used by students: 'one of the hunters'.

Sentence 10. The construction 'لم يلبث إلا قليلاً' was not easy for many of the average candidates. Students need to know the 'أخوات كان' and similar constructions in order to deal with the classical exam. They then need to know how they convert them into typical English sentences.

Sentence 14. The meaning here was difficult to put into good English without losing some of the ideas in the English. Only the best students made a really good attempt to render it into good English.

Sentence 15. This was a significant sentence which on the whole was well tackled by candidates. Surprisingly, the first part of the sentence 'لا تتخاذلن في المعالجة' was usually more difficult than the longer second part of the sentence.

Sentence 18. This sentence included a number of different ideas and full marks were obtained only by those who were able to convert all those ideas into reasonable English.

Sentence 20. The difficult part here for the average student was the last section of the sentence

'ولم ينقطع رجاؤه منهم'. Many of them left this part out.

Sentence 22. This was a difficult sentence for many; only the best were able to score maximum marks on it. Most students failed to realise the implied conditional of the first phrase; even if they did spot this, many were unable to use the conditional sentence correctly, and obviously need help with the meanings of conditional sentences in English, together with work on sequence of tenses with 'if'. In addition, the word 'العمران' was very difficult for average students who generally failed to understand what it referred to. Many students also failed to translate 'يبأس منكن' and thereby lost marks.

Sentence 24. The 'if' sentence and the sequence of tenses associated with 'if' were again badly done by many students. The use of 'انتهينا' in this place also caused a number of problems in use of English.

Sentence 29. This was generally understood, but average students failed to convey all the details mentioned in the original Arabic text and failed to get over into English a full understanding of the points mentioned.

Question 2

In general, while many candidates demonstrated a fairly good understanding of the content of the text, others found it a difficult passage to translate because of its subject matter with a writer talking about the experience of writing. Markers were nicely surprised how well candidates adapted to the subject and were able to make a reasonable attempt to translate it.

Sentence 1. The passage began with a typical Arabic construction, and only the best candidates were able to render it into satisfactory English, viz: 'All the stories I have written...' If students stayed with the Arabic word sequence, they ended up with a foreign-sounding clause, viz: 'All what I wrote from stories.' This latter rendering also changes the intended meaning of the writer since it gives the impression that the writer wrote down material from other stories, rather than telling us what he himself wrote.

Sentence 2. The Arabic here was easy to understand but it was difficult to put into good English, first because of the reference to the writer's two ages. This was then followed by a typical Arabic construction

'...وأنا أقرأ وأكتب' in the present tense: only the better candidates were able to leave out the 'and' and then to use the past tense when putting the idea into English.

Sentence 5. Even competent candidates were likely to use 'papers' for the Arabic 'ورق', on the grounds that the latter word is obviously not a single sheet of paper, and in their minds needed to be in the plural. However, something made of the material, paper, is different from something made up of 'papers' which could be newspapers or sweet papers. Students were clearly in need of lessons on materials and their make up in English.

Sentence 7. Again, this includes a typical Arabic construction, and only the better candidates were able to find some suitable English phrases. A number of students confused 'coffee' with 'yoghurt' and there were many 'half cups' (no meaning) for 'half empty cups'.

Sentence 8. This sentence was a challenge, because it was difficult to include all the strands of thought in a translation and therefore hard to achieve full marks. A surprising number of students did not know the word 'الشرفة'.

Sentence 12. This should have been an easy sentence to translate, but many failed to achieve full marks. A surprising number of candidates could not differentiate between those most useful adverbs of time: always/often/sometimes/rarely/occasionally, etc. Others did not spot that the man was a street sweeper, or thought he was a garbage man, who collects rubbish rather than sweep streets. The strangest translation for the word 'كُنَّاس' was 'people'

Sentence 14. In spite of the vowel mark inserted in the Arabic 'ألفه' to help students towards comprehension, the help was generally spurned and many students referred in their translation to 'a thousand days'.

Sentence 15. This should have been an easy sentence to translate, but many students lost marks here. The same weakness with adverbs of time 'غالباً' was evident here as well as in Sentence 12.

Sentence 18. Many candidates failed to gain full marks here, because they left the original text and failed to include all the ideas contained in the original.

Sentence 19. Average students tended to omit 'الأفندية والستات' and accordingly lost marks.

Sentence 20. This looked an easy sentence to translate, but was not well done by average candidates. The expression 'قَطْعاً' was ignored by a large number of them.

Sentence 21. This was poorly translated in general. First, many candidates missed the immediacy of 'ها هو' as well as the typical English phrase for the typical Arabic: 'خلية من خلاياه'. There was a tendency to confuse 'استمتع' with 'استمتعت' with the weaker candidates.

Sentence 22 and 23. Apart from the last phrase these sentences looked easy to translate, but many marks were lost with the number 'ملايين' not 'مليون', the adjective 'البسطاء' being missed, and the past tense of the verb in sentence 22 contrasted with the future of sentence 23.

Sentence 24. This looked a difficult sentence to translate, but was quite well done. The main difficulty was with the verbs: 'عاكس' nature and 'مقاوم' darkness.

Sentence 25. This was beyond the scope of most candidates, even better ones: though some had obviously heard of Don Quixote, many candidates lost marks here.

Sentences 26 and 27. The best translations here would need a knowledge of Don Quixote's exploits, so again many marks were lost.

Sentences 29 and 30. There were two main difficulties here: 'منتهى أملى' and 'مفعول'. Weaker candidates thought that 'my hope had ended', and didn't understand that 'مفعول' was best rendered as 'effective', or 'effectiveness'.

Question 3.

The average quality of answers here was good, though there are still those candidates for whom vowelling is a total mystery.

Question 4.

Sentences 1 and 2. These were not difficult to translate, but where candidates lost marks was in a failure to transfer all the ideas contained in the English into Arabic. Weaker candidates omitted some of the ideas unnecessarily and were therefore unable to score full marks.

Sentence 3. The majority of candidates thought that the house referred to in the dream had not been in existence before, and missed the whole point of the passage that the writer is looking back with sadness on the old family home which existed for real in the past, but now was a mere figment of the writer's imagination. They therefore translated 'as if it had existed before' rather than 'as it had existed before' using 'كأنه كان' rather than 'كما كان'.

Sentence 4. Marks were lost here through inaccuracy: many candidates translated 'light entered from the window' failing to realise that in the dreamer's mind, the light was coming out of the house through the windows. Many candidates thought that the house had only one window:

The English clearly uses the plural here. Some candidates lost marks through failing to translate 'softly'.

Sentence 6. Some candidates lost marks here through not knowing what a handkerchief was; others lost marks through failing to translate 'the bowl'.

Sentence 7. Marks were lost here for not understanding the idea behind 'witness. Some candidates lost marks through using an unsuitable word here.

Sentence 8. A number of candidates failed to find a suitable word for 'heap' and ignored the fact that the books were marked because they were now ready to be returned.

Sentence 10. Most candidates gave the impression that they thought the cushions actually carried the print of the heads of the family on them, and few candidates made clear that the imprints were only the shapes of the heads of members of the family.

Sentence 11. There was a tendency to leave out information contained in the original text of the English. Many students did not know what 'ashes' were; they did not carry over the idea of the 'log fire'; failed to show that the fire was still going the next day; and thought that 'throughout' meant 'until' the next morning.

Sentence 12. Marks were lost here through a failure to understand that 'mournful' meant 'sad', and what exactly was meant by a 'jaw' that 'sagged'.

Sentence 14. A number of candidates lost marks through ignoring or failing to understand 'up till now unseen'.

Sentence 15. Very few students knew the meaning of 'hovered' and many others ignored 'for an instant', perhaps because they did not know that 'an instant' is a 'moment'.

Sentence 17. This sentence was not well done by many candidates, because they forgot there were two things buried. Many others equated the house being 'a grave' with its being a 'graveyard': these are not the same thing.

Sentence 18. Marks were lost here by candidates reading 'walking hours' for 'waking hours, but most of them were able to find suitable synonyms for 'bitter'.

Sentence 21. Some candidates lost marks by failing to note that the writer still sensed the taste of tea.

Section 22. Candidates seemed to lose marks here because they failed to register in their Arabic translation all the details which the text contained in English, even though the vocabulary was not challenging. In addition, the word 'lawns' caused difficulty, so some students avoided it in translation, or used an inappropriate word in Arabic.

Section 24. Only the best students scored full marks here; others failed to register that the writer was lying here, or that they were now many hundreds of miles distant from the house. The majority also thought that an 'alien land' must be 'visitors from space', which does not blend with the meaning, thereby losing more marks.

Section 25. This did not include difficult vocabulary, but had several details connected with the room, and marks were lost by candidates' failure to translate all of the related adjectives.

Section 26. Many candidates lost marks through having to ignore some of the verbs because they did not know them and could not work out from the context what they might mean.

Section 27. Marks were lost by candidates who did not know how to spell 'عيني' when translating 'my eyes'.

Section 28. Many candidates managed an acceptable translation, albeit with some details missing.

Section 29. Candidates lost marks by failing to translate 'long', 'no doubt', and 'uneventful', probably because they did not know what the writer meant by using these words, even if they, the candidates, knew the words.

Section 30. Students lost marks by translating the second word, 'they' by 'لديهم' instead of 'لديها'. Some lost marks by translating the relative particle 'that' into Arabic even though it should have been omitted in this sentence. Finally, it is clear that students need to learn how and when to use the relative clauses in English and how they correspond to relative clauses in Arabic.

Question 5.

Generally, the tashkil required at the end of words was not well done, though the majority of candidates picked up a few marks for it. A number of students failed to pick up any marks for tashkil, because they ignored it.

Sentence (a). Students lost marks by not knowing how 'As for' translates into Arabic, nor how it operates in the sentence with the particle 'ف' before the predicate. A number of students lost marks by failing to use the numbers correctly with the word 'dollars' after the numbers.

Sentence (b). Marks were lost on the spelling of 'الرئيس', and the precise meanings of 'declared' and 'conference'.

Sentence (c). Candidates lost marks through failing to show that they knew how the use of the negative particle 'لم' affects the spelling of certain verbs. Many also showed that they did not understand how the sound masculine plural of nouns operates when the subject of the sentence. Many students lost marks through spelling 'المباراة' incorrectly.

Sentence (d). Some candidates lost marks through not knowing the word 'laboratories'. Still more of them lost marks through failing to translate the relative clause correctly into Arabic, not recognising whether they should be using the feminine form or not. The phrase '...Not only...;', '...but also..' presented problems for a number of students, and the neat trade-off in Arabic between 'equipment' and 'number' was missed by a surprisingly high number of candidates.

Sentence (e). This was quite well done even by weaker candidates, though the expression 'tourist guide' proved difficult for a number of them.

Sentence (f). Here, weaker candidates found difficulty with 'contrary' as they seem not to have known the word. The weaker ones also tended to translate 'most people' as 'all people in general', thereby losing some marks. A minority of students understood 'acupuncture' and only these were able to produce something useful like 'إبر'. Again, the use of 'ليس' presented problems, as did the spelling of 'مؤلماً'. Weaker candidates did not attempt to add the expression 'at all'.

Sentence (g). The translation of 'the most widespread form of creative art' was difficult for a number of students, especially the weaker ones. A surprising number of them also found difficult, the use of the dual in the accusative, 'شيينين', and they lost marks through this.

Sentence (h). This was generally answered quite well: a lot of students knew the word 'advertisement', but many ignored the word 'published', while a few spelt the word 'زرقاء' incorrectly.

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