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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

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

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General comments

The theme of Classical Arabic 4CA01 paper is to provide a framework for the development of written and transmission skills. This demand is further assessed with the practical application of the Arabic grammar. Schools should emphasise this by training their candidates to transmit the ideas in the original text by using sound sentence structure.

Accurate punctuation is of vital importance in translation; of course, there are obvious complexities, such as the typical way English uses full-stops and capital letters to delineate the beginning and ending of sentences, or the way the English Language uses the past tense throughout a story that happened in the past, and therefore contrasts with Arabic in which there is a common tendency to slip into what looks like a present tense even where the meaning is clearly in the past.

It has been noticed that some students tend to include alternative answers in brackets or leave a blank in place of words they do not know the translation of. However, this practice should be discouraged as it will lead to the loss of valuable marks.

Another important issue is, the comments of examiners on the quality of handwriting. Doubtless, good penmanship should be more than just encouraged. As a Principal Examiner, I urge schools to instate a policy on legible writing. It is part of literacy anyway so why not enforce it?

Examiners noted following points on different questions:

Question 1

Translation: Arabic to English.

Some candidates found the context of this fine classical Arabic text unfamiliar, which posed some difficulty to them. Schools and centres should facilitate this by extensive practice in reading classical text and teachers should give proper guidance in the skills of written English.

The following sections were ones which many candidates struggled to translate accurately, using good English to convey meanings:

In the first paragraph, many candidates were not able to translate نفيساً correctly, and the word was often mistranslated as 'psychological' or was totally missed out. ملكهم was often translated wrong too.

In the second Paragraph, many did not translate the word تخلل as required but went on to translate it as something else. In this same paragraph, the word السوقة was translated wrong most of times.

In the third Paragraph الرفق والتطف was often translated by using only one word. The word المحافل was also misunderstood by a good number of candidates resulting often in the mistranslation as 'parties' or not mentioned at all.

Question 2

Translation: Arabic to English.

Candidates clearly felt more at home with the topic of this question, which was modern and on a subject recognisable from their own experience: the differences between siblings. This gave the opportunity for many candidates to gain some good marks.

There were particular problems with the following:

In the first paragraph the word الولدين was translated incorrectly by some candidates as parents.

In the Second paragraph the word بشرته was often translated by many candidates incorrectly as skin.

In the Third paragraph the expression البذور proved to be a challenge to some candidates. Also, the translation of سخريه was often translated incorrectly.

Question 3

Vocalization

Overall, there was an impressive quality of the answers this year. A number of answers were completely right and showed a good grasp of grammar and syntax; some were mainly correct, indicating some gaps in grammatical awareness, but nevertheless quite good. There were still a stubborn group of answers where it was clear that candidates had to rely on guesswork: this indicates that their understanding of Arabic Morphology is shaky, and they have not managed to internalise the necessary lesson material.

Question 4

Translation: English to Arabic

The text had a mixture of straightforward sentences which were simple and easy for candidates to translate and some very challenging sentences. The more abled candidates translated the text in a very classical manner while others struggled resulting in many omissions and gaps being left without any translation. Often the lack of knowledge of good classical vocabulary and the understanding of Arabic grammar was clearly reflected in their translation. It has been noticed that some candidates wrote as they might have spoken without thinking of the written form or the syntax of the sentences they wrote. This usually indicates a lack of reading practice, without which it is much more difficult to write correctly, in any language.

In the first paragraph, many did not translate the word 'foreign' correctly. The phrase 'reached his bag' was another phrase which many often mistranslated.

In the second paragraph the sentence, "that word echoed through my bones", appeared as a challenge to some candidates and so the few words coming after that like: 'captivating and impressive' and 'flooded me with fantasy'.

In the last paragraph, the sentence 'brain-blur' was a challenging translation for many candidates.

Question 5.

Sentences for Translation: Arabic to English.

The language in the sentences for this question was carefully chosen. Candidates were not only expected to give an accurate translation of the sentences in Arabic but, they had to use classical language, correct spelling and vocalize words correctly. As a result, high scoring reflected candidate's ability to deliver the sentence correctly in good grammatical classical Arabic.

For a number of students, the sentences provided the opportunity to show their writing skills, and they were well able to achieve high marks. All too often, however, the general weakness in grammar and the use of guesswork in tashkil was very much to the fore.

The comments of most examiners were that many candidates neglected the vocalization of words due to the lack of knowledge of basic Arabic grammar, hence schools should advise candidates to practice well the most basic yet important grammatical rules to apply it in the translation of these sentences.

Style in writing these sentences were another problem which many tended to write in a way where the whole aim was to pass on the meaning of these sentences without giving much importance to the spelling, style in writing and vocalization.

These areas proved to be particularly the most areas of concern:

5a) the expression 'oil resources' was not translated correctly.

The appliance of grammatical rules regarding the المبتدأ والخبر was a very common mistake in vocalizing this sentence.

5b) this sentence was often translated correctly with a variety of words used to translate 'fully prepared'.

5c) the more able candidates knew how to omit the ن in مهندسو السدّ, this was a challenge for a good number of students.

5d) many students did not use the grammar of the الفعل بعد أدوات الجزم correctly in this sentence.

5e) the word both was translated incorrectly for some candidates. Also, the correct application of the grammar of كلا was a challenge for most candidates.

5f) this sentence was often translated correctly.

5g) the grammar of الأسماء الخمسة was expected to be used in translating this sentence, but many candidates used the correct words without application of correct or relevant grammatical rules.

5h) the application of the grammar of the استعمال المفرد المؤنث مع جمع غير العاقل was not used correctly by most students.

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