Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Modern Greek (4MG0) Paper 01

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General Comments

The majority of the students who entered this examination performed well and provided good translations, from English into Greek and vice versa. There was evidence of good lexical knowledge, both in the translation and the essay questions and many responses demonstrated very good ability to narrate, argue and describe, high competency in the application of grammar (both in terms of syntax and morphology) and, when it came to the more creative essays, ability to write with sufficient variety and interest.

On some occasions, there was a pattern of errors regarding the conventions of orthography and indication of the position of the stress. There were some unfortunate violations concerning the letters of the Greek alphabet, for example u instead of υ and t instead of τ. A number of students, including the ones with very good language skills ignored the rule that, requires that every Greek word that has more than one syllables carries stress on one of its three final syllables. Some carelessness was also evident, regarding presentation and writing in a legible, organized manner and this made reading some scripts resemble a decoding challenge.

In relation to translation, both from English into Greek and vice versa, candidates ought to note that even though they may consider various options regarding choice of word or structure in their drafts, the final copy should not contain alternatives (e.g. ανταλλαγή/αλλαγή, happened/had happened). When this happens, the examiner only marks the first word in a series of alternatives.

In this exam series there was remarkable improvement regarding adherence to the rubrics and the vast majority of candidates observed the word limit.

 Comments on individual questions are as follows:

Question 1

Almost 65% of the candidates got grade 15 and above. The majority of candidates scored very good marks in this section. Many students produced competent translations and achieved a good score, with very few grammatical inaccuracies and only occasional wrong use of vocabulary. Despite evidence of such occasional errors, the translations usually communicated the sense of the source text correctly. The challenges encountered by a small number of candidates were mainly restricted to a couple of words and did not usually affect the communicative efficiency of the translations seriously. Some found words like *traditional, escape, wooden and capital* challenging. Whereas, several students failed to transfer the meaning of *"an icon of Virgin Mary is being carried"* with accuracy or appropriate vocabulary. *Icon* was sometimes rendered as '*εικονίδιο*' or '*φωτογραφία*' instead of '*εικόνα*'. Some students translated the text as '*ρωτήσαμε*' instead of the correct '*ζητήσαμε από*'. Besides these lexical challenges, very good and or excellent translations were offered by a good number of students. However, a very few students did not manage to convey a good sense of what the source text was about.

Questions 2a and 2b

Most students' responses showed evidence of good language skills and satisfactory competences in transferring meaning from Greek into English. The majority of the translations communicated the essence of the text accurately, and showed that the candidate was in control of meaning, despite slips in the construction of certain structures. Questions 2 (a) and 2 (b) did not pose major difficulties lexically. Furthermore, there was evidence of very good knowledge and application of grammar. Word order in English occasionally posed a challenge for the students but this did not interfere with meaning.

Question 2a

Translations of question 2(a) showed excellent command of vocabulary and idioms, good language awareness and consistently good application of the grammatical system. Most candidates, in fact almost 70%, achieved at least 15 marks out of 20.

There were very few error patterns observed, as the topic was very close to the interests of students and even the less able candidates proved skillful at coming up with acceptable, even though not entirely accurate, vocabulary. Such examples include the word *sadness* or *depression for δυστυχία* or *affect badly* instead of *harm* (βλάψει). Some examples of less successful choice of words included *force* and *strength* for *δύναμη* or the rendering of «χάνει πολλά πράγματα» as "loses many things" instead of "misses out". Candidates are reminded that context and collocation play a large part in transferring meaning from one language to the other and that a certain word may have different applications and semantic values depending on context. The word «χάνω» in Greek may be rendered as "miss" or "lose" depending on the context. Similarly, the word «βαθμοί» may be rendered as "degrees", when we are talking about temperature, but in this context it refers to school "grades".

Question 2b

This question proved slightly more challenging than question 2 (a) and the mean mark of most candidates' performance at 14.63 out of 20, was slightly lower than in question 2(a). Despite a little 'awkward' English and occasional carelessness, many candidates produced reasonably accurate translations, demonstrating good command of vocabulary and awareness of grammar.

Patterns of errors had to do with choice of preposition and vocabulary in general, rather than knowledge and application of linguistic structures.
Examples of such less than successful choices had to do with the following:
- "travel in a city", instead of the correct term "to a city;
- "watch/see classes", instead of the correct term "attend classes";
- "Freedom" instead of the correct term "independence".
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Regarding word order, some less able candidates rendered the last phrase by leaving the Greek word order, as it was in the source text, instead of manipulating it to respond to the rules of syntax in English, e.g. "comes to our country the foreign school" instead of "the foreign school comes to our country".

Question 3

Question 3, has traditionally been the strong point for the majority of candidates and this year many candidates achieved good marks. Most of this year's cohort gained at least 30 marks out of 40. Some rubric violations were evident when students failed to indicate their choice of essay question. Adherence to rubric however, was largely observed and it was very welcome to see so many candidates respecting the word limit and writing well-structured and largely relevant responses, with evidence of ability to describe, narrate, argue, explain and expand.

Performance in all essay questions was very good, especially with regard to questions 3(a) and 3(c).

Comments on individual essay questions are as follows:

Question 3(a) was the second most popular this year. Students wrote compelling essays, offering strong arguments about the environmental problems that plague their country. The mean mark for candidates who chose this question was 32.75 (out of 40) which is rather good. Able responses stayed away from platitudes about world issues regarding the environment, focused on their local area (as the rubric stipulated) and provided a justification or explanation about why they consider a particular environmental problem important.

Question 3(b) proved the most popular question, as it invited the personal narrative that most students are comfortable with. Many students wrote apt, personalized narratives about how they envision their life in the future. Some students were a little off-topic, when they wrote entirely about things in the future that were not so much focused on their personal circumstances, but on the world in general. Such responses were not relevant when they neglected to show how this vision of the future would have an impact on the students' own lives.

A smaller number of students attempted question 3(c), but those who did, performed well, with many achieving marks from the top tiers of the assessment criteria. There was evidence of misunderstanding the question, when some students wrote about the issues that divide the society that they live in, rather than what divides peoples of different countries. A good answer offered description and arguments that focused on issues that create conflict between different countries and provided examples to substantiate the points they made.

Question 3(d) was the least popular response, as only 49 students chose to write about the importance of fashion in their lives. There were some interesting and well put together responses that, compared attitudes to fashion among young people and the influence of the media in the sartorial choices we make. A good response concluded with a personal testimony that described the role of fashion in the candidate's life.

Question 3(e) was the third most popular and according to established format required a creative approach to the topic in question. Many students, wrote with interest and variety about the hero/heroine in their lives, usually one of their parents. The majority of these responses were distinguished by good range of vocabulary that avoided repetition, successful employment of complex structures and idiom and correct sequence of material. Excellent responses provided good examples that justified the reasons why they considered a particular person their hero.

In conclusion, this last series of the now retired IGCSE specification in Greek was successful and many candidates achieved excellent marks. We would like to thank the teachers and students who have chosen IGCSE Greek over the years.

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