

**Modern Greek
(continuers)**

2009 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Languages Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

MODERN GREEK (CONTINUERS)

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GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2009, forty-eight students sat the examination.

Average mean scores were:

Conversation and Discussion	81.10%
Section 1: Listening and Responding	70.58%
Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A	71.40%
Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B	74.00%
Section 3: Writing in Modern Greek	69.10%.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: ORAL EXAMINATION

Section 1: Conversation

The oral examination of 15 minutes consists of a conversation and a discussion. In the conversation, students have to maintain a conversation with the examiner(s) about their personal world. Topics included life, family and friends, home, the local environment, school, hobbies, interests, aspirations, and travel.

In 2009, this section proved to be the strongest in the whole examination. A good number of students performed well and showed thorough preparation. Most students responded with relevant and extended information and opinions on a range of topics. Many students also displayed confidence in initiating the discussion and related anecdotes to support statements and opinions on certain topics of particular interest to them. They could elaborate on topics and go beyond basic facts to include reasons, impressions, and descriptions. At the same time they used accurate language and an extensive vocabulary, and paid particular attention to pronunciation, intonation, stress, and tempo. These students possessed a sound working knowledge and mastery of all the tenses and were able to use complex structures, including passive and subjunctive moods. They were also at ease using the second person plural when addressing examiners.

Other students were able to discuss a wide range of topics, but it was evident that they could have spent more time preparing for this section. Their responses lacked depth and elaboration. Some students asked for clarification of questions, and could then maintain the flow of the conversation without much prompting from examiners. Communication was mostly effective with a good degree of fluency and authenticity.

Some students seemed to struggle even with simple questions and grammatical structures. These students needed considerable prompting and their responses were very simplistic. They were unable to advance the conversation and rarely used connectives, which sometimes resulted in awkward sentence structures.

It would clearly benefit all students to have regular 'conversation type' activities throughout the year, building up their vocabulary and the language necessary for all the topics covered in this section.

Most Common Errors

- The adjective 'Greek' presented many problems: *ελληνικούς ανθρώπους, ελληνικά άνθρωποι, ελληνικά χορό*

- Genders and noun-adjective agreements: e.g. *αρχαίοι ελληνίδες, το πιο αγαπημένη μου, πολλές ταξίδια, καλούς δασκάλους*
- The irregular verbs *πρέπε* and *μου αρέσε*: many students used incorrect terms such as *πρέπουμε να πάμε, πρέπω να κάνω, αρέσω τα ποδόσφαιρο, το άρεσα πολύ*
- The indefinite article, *ένας, μία ένα*: e.g. *ένα και μισή χρονών, ένα αδερφή*
- Incorrect tenses of verbs (simple past, past continuous, subjunctive) were also noticeable: *έχω πάω έξω*
- Incorrect cases, mainly accusative: *είναι μαζί με ο Γιώργος, παντρεύτηκε με η μητέρα μου, από στη Ρόδο.*

Section 2: Discussion

The discussion relates to the in-depth study, where students are required to discuss a topic that they have researched at length — one that relates to an aspect of the ‘Modern Greek-speaking Communities’ or ‘Changing World’ themes. It is important that students and teachers choose topics and tasks which are suited to the students’ ability and which allow for full development and discussion. A poor choice of topic tends to inhibit the ensuing discussion. Once again ‘Migration’ was the dominant topic for the in-depth study, with many students talking about the same tasks, resources, etc.

Students who were guided in their choice of topic stood out from the rest of the students. Their interest for the subject matter and their passion shone through in the discussion and they were able to discuss their topic effectively. They responded well to questions from the examiners and it was evident that they had put many hours into mastering the vocabulary and language structures required for this section.

Most students were able to talk very generally about their chosen topic, but struggled when asked specific questions about their research. They were well versed on their tasks, but their responses to questions were superficial and they could not elaborate, so examiners were not able to extract meaningful responses from them.

Students who had prepared ‘Migration’ as their topic used limited resources and relied on an interview (with a relative) as a key resource.

Overall students who chose their own topic performed much better than those who shared a common topic.

Other topics in 2009 were:

- The Ancient Dorian cities of Rhodes
- The Byzantine Empire
- Aghia Sophia
- Orthodoxy
- The Parthenon Marbles
- The History of Greek Music.

Students had similar problems in their use of the Greek language in both the discussion and the conversation. When discussing their in-depth study, students’ language difficulties were highlighted by inadequate preparation. The stronger students were clear and thorough with their information. They had the appropriate vocabulary and grammar required to discuss their topic with ease resulting in an interesting discussion. They spoke in an appropriate manner, catering for their audience and the purpose of the task. The less successful students demonstrated a lack of preparation and limited language skills. They had difficulty in explaining and discussing their tasks and used very simple language and repetitive responses.

It would benefit students if teachers worked closely with them, guiding them carefully in their choice of topic. Tasks should be set in collaboration with the students early in

the year, to give them plenty of time to research, to prepare their written tasks, and to practise for their discussion.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Students performed best in Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B, while Section 3: Writing in Modern Greek was the most difficult. Section 1: Listening and Responding, and Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A were comparable in terms of achievement levels. People think that these two sections are the easiest because students answer in English, but they still prove challenging for students. It is evident that students are still not fully prepared to critically analyse and evaluate texts. This is an area that teachers should work on continuously with students and carefully prepare questions that allow for these types of responses, rather than merely translating texts.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

There were five unrelated texts of varying lengths and text types. For all texts the questions and answers were in English.

To be adequately prepared for this section, students must practise their listening comprehension skills. It is still evident that many students find questions that require critical and analytical thinking challenging. Effective use of the dictionary would really help students.

Overall, most students were able to convey information accurately and appropriately. Identification of information is usually an easier task. Students, however, almost always experience difficulties with analysis of information and using it to correctly respond to questions. On almost every occasion students indicated they had understood of the texts, but they had difficulty analysing and communicating this information in English.

Text 1

This text was short and most students responded appropriately. It was a speech by a representative from the organisation Doctors without Borders.

There was one question worth 3 marks and students had to identify the purpose of the visit to the school. Most students answered it well, with more than half the students achieving full marks.

Text 2

The second text was a dialogue between two students discussing future career choices. There were two questions: part (a), for 2 marks, required the students to provide evidence that suggested that architecture was a good choice for Helen.

In part (b), for 3 marks, students had to give their impression of Kostas and support their answer with evidence from the text.

A good number of students dealt with part (a) accurately. However, many students were not able to support their impression of Kostas. Many suggested that Kostas was lazy and easy-going but did not give any more details. Others suggested that Kostas was a very compassionate person because he was 'helping Helen make her choices'. The average mean mark for this text was 66.00%, with only 8% of students receiving full marks.

Text 3

This text was an interview. A representative student was being interviewed about a pamphlet on the issue of correct recycling. This was by far the most challenging text for students with a mean score of 61.25%. Only 8% of students received full marks.

Part (a), for 2 marks, asked students to explain the meaning of ‘τα σκουπίδια θα μας πνίξουν’ in the context of the text. It was surprising how many students answered a good part of this question in Greek.

Students are reminded to read the instructions carefully — in this case students were instructed to ‘answer ... in *English*’.

Part (b), for 2 marks, asked students to identify what Giota and her classmates hoped to achieve with the publication of the pamphlet.

Many students mixed up these questions, and in 3 (a) students translated this literally and did not relate it to the context of the text.

Text 4

Students responded very well to this text, with an average mean mark of 80.83%. Almost half the student cohort received full marks.

In part (a), for 3 marks, a text from a school announcement about a fundraiser, students had to write a diary note to their parents, telling them about the fundraiser and asking for their help.

Most students answered this question well. However, some students wrote a formal note in formal register, others began with ‘Dear Mum’ and closed with ‘Thank you for your help’. Students who did not receive full marks were not able to identify all the explicit requests made.

Text 5

This was the longest text and it was, overall, answered reasonably well. The average mean mark was 69% and 8% of students received full marks. The text was a dialogue between siblings about the forthcoming visit of their relatives from Greece.

There was one question worth 5 marks and students had to compare the siblings’ attitudes to the proposed visit, supporting their answer with evidence from the text.

Generally students responded well to this question, but many lacked the ability to make clear comparisons between Andreas’s and Vana’s attitudes. Quite a few students listed information from the text without necessarily linking it to the question. Some students did not understand time correctly, with some indicating that Vana had already travelled to Greece, and others that she had already finished university.

Section 2: Reading and Responding

Part A

This section was answered reasonably well with an average mean score of 71.40%.

It is important that students read the questions carefully and look at the number of marks allocated for that question as an indication of the breadth and depth of response required. That is a good indication of the length of the anticipated answer and how many points to look for. Although it is important to answer in sentences, students should avoid rewriting the entire question as it takes up valuable time. It is important that all answers are based on the texts provided and not on students’ background knowledge and/or opinions.

The texts were reasonably challenging, the topics current, and the questions varied. The more successful students understood the texts and answered the questions appropriately in complete sentences. Some students had difficulties with specific aspects of text analysis, while others used their own background knowledge of the topics and proceeded to answer questions based on their own opinions.

Poor English expression and spelling were issues for many students.

Text 6

This text was on a current topic, the importance of following a healthy diet. This was the better answered of the two texts with a mean score of 77.86%. Although the text was not overly difficult, some idioms and phrases proved challenging. The difficulty for most students was not so much understanding the text but analysing what the question was asking for. Most students could not go beyond surface reading.

Generally, part (a) was answered well. Students were able to identify the benefits and give all the relevant details.

Most students answered part (b) well. More successful students compared the eating habits of the Ancient Greeks with the eating habits of people today. Less successful students simply translated the text.

Cases of poor expression and irrelevant information (own ideas) were plentiful.

Text 7

This was also about a very current issue, but students did not perform as well as in the previous text. The mean score for this text was 65.00%.

This part was generally answered very well, although some students based their answer on prior knowledge or were not able to identify the correct answer in the text.

Part (b) distinguished the most successful students from the remainder of the cohort. Most students understood the text, but they were not able to identify the underlying emotions in the text — emotions such as passion, pride, patriotism, and anger. Almost all identified anger and went on to explain why Giota was so angry or so emotional about the Parthenon Marbles. Less successful students simply translated the text.

Overall, most students answered part (c) well. Students who did not receive full marks had incorporated this answer into the previous question and therefore wrote only a very brief explanation, for example, '*it is time*'.

It was interesting to note that, even though this was a very current theme, especially as there was much publicity with the opening of the new Acropolis Museum, some students were completely baffled by this text. This was very evident in some responses.

Part B

The stimulus in the examination was a 'situations vacant' advertisement requiring young people to apply for part-time jobs. Students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of the text and to convey information accurately and appropriately. Their task was to write an email to Jobs4teens applying for one of the positions. This section was answered very well with a mean score of 74%. A good proportion of students scored full marks.

Some Observations

Of the three positions, most applications focused on the waiter/waitress.

Although students responded well on the personal details (name, age, interests), some students were not able to expand on 'why that position would interest you' or 'why you believe you are a suitable candidate'. They touched briefly on these points, but did not elaborate.

There were a wide range of abilities evident in this section, with written expression being the key to success. The more successful students organised their information very well in a logical and sequential way, were original, and used authentic vocabulary. The work of the less successful students clearly lacked depth and minimal information was provided. Some students also had weaknesses in sentence structure and expressions were literal translations from English. For example, 'to have a good time', *να έχουμε καλή ώρα*, instead of *να περάσουμε καλά*; 'I'm interested in', *είμαι ενδιαφέρει*, instead of *με ενδιαφέρει*.

Appropriate salutations were a problem for some students — *Κυροί, Αγαπητή κύριος η κυρία, Σε όποιον το ενδιαφέρει*. In most cases, students wrote the required number of words.

Common Grammatical Errors

- incorrect articles, *το διαφήμιση, τους φιλενάδες, στην καλοκαίρι*
- incorrect spelling of verb endings, e.g. *νομίζο, έχω τελειώση*
- incorrect agreement of adjectives and nouns, e.g. *το αγαπημένο ελληνικό ομάδα*
- incorrect use of tenses (future continuous and perfect) *θέλω να βρίσκω δουλειά,*
- incorrect use of accusative case, e.g. *να βλέπω η Αυστραλία, μου αρέσει την μουσική*
- incorrect letters, e.g. *χανά (ξανά) πέχανε (πέξανε) βορά (φορά) κξέρο (ξέρω) δουλέψω (δουλέψω).*

Section 3: Writing in Modern Greek

Students had to write between 250 and 300 words in Modern Greek on one of the topics. There was an almost even spread of students in the choice of questions (33% of students answered Question 9, 39% answered Question 10, and 27% answered Question 11).

A wide range of abilities were observed in this section. Stronger students could use complex vocabulary and expressions with ease, while less successful students presented simple ideas and basic vocabulary and were not able to elaborate or further develop ideas. The stronger students were able to use a wide range of vocabulary and idioms appropriate to the context. They were able to structure their work clearly and effectively, which added to the clarity and coherence of their writing.

General Observations

It is important that teachers help students to develop their writing skills. This may be done by scaffolding writing tasks for each of the topics covered and encouraging students to read a wide range of texts. All text types should be covered with students as stated in the curriculum statement.

Teachers are advised to impress on their students the importance of not identifying themselves or their school in their writing.

Common Grammatical Errors

- incorrect articles, *η τρόπο ζωής*
- incorrect spelling of verb endings, e.g. *να κάτσο καλά, να κάνο μπάνιω*
- incorrect agreement of adjectives and nouns, e.g. *τα πρώτο Ολυπιακός Αγγώνες*
- incorrect use of tenses, *θέλω να βρίσκω δουλειά*

- incorrect spelling — για (γεια) δη (δει)
- poor expression — τώρα έχω γίνει πιο πολύ εμπιστευτή, έπρεπε να, η πειρία (πείρα).

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