

Modern Greek (continuers)

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Languages Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

MODERN GREEK (CONTINUERS)

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This year fifty-nine students presented themselves for the examination.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: ORAL EXAMINATION

General Comments

The oral examination, lasting 15 minutes, had two sections: a conversation and a discussion on an In-Depth Study.

In the conversation section, students needed to maintain a conversation about their personal world. Topics covered included life, family and friends, home, local environment, school, hobbies, interests, aspirations, and travel.

Section 1: Conversation

Most students performed well in the conversation. They were able to hold a conversation in the time allocated and interacted well with the examiners. They were able to respond and build on questions from the examiners. They expressed their ideas with clarity, paying particular attention to pronunciation, intonation, and stress.

It was evident that the more successful students had prepared themselves thoroughly for this section. They were able to converse on a variety of topics, to respond confidently, and to use a range of vocabulary. They also presented an excellent range of information, opinions, and ideas in highly relevant and logical responses. Students were able to pick up cues from the examiners, and sustain the conversation and further elaborate on the topics being discussed. They also self-corrected and conveyed their enthusiasm throughout the conversation, which provided evidence of involvement. These students possessed a sound working knowledge, demonstrated 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 the examiners.

The less successful conversations dealt with a wide range of topics but it was evident that students were not as well-prepared as the more successful candidates. Their responses appeared to lack depth and they did not give extended answers. When some students did not fully understand the question, they responded with a memorised answer rather than ask for clarification, resulting in an answer that was often irrelevant or off-topic. Some students seemed to have learnt the vocabulary required for this section but with considerable mispronunciation of words. Common errors included incorrect uses of cases (especially the accusative), non-agreement of nouns and adjectives, and genders.

Some students were unable to respond to the variety of topics discussed in the examination. They appeared to understand the questions but were unable to respond or did so incorrectly. Some required prompting and their responses were simplistic, frequently resorting to material learnt by rote. Very basic errors were evident here, for example, τα μέρες, Ο μπαμπάς μου τον λένε, αρέσω να πάω έξω με τα φίλες μου, στο Σάββατο δουλεύω.

Students need to be exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and language structures to be successful in the oral conversation. Teachers must incorporate conversation activities on a more regular basis. The number of Stage 1 students who were promoted to Stage 2 Greek even though their abilities were not to standard stood out this year. Teachers should review this process carefully and consider the best outcomes for their students.

Section 2: Discussion

The discussion section of the oral examination relates to the In-depth Study. In this section, students are required to discuss a topic which they have researched in depth and that relates to an aspect of Modern Greek language and culture.

Students who had chosen their topics wisely and had researched it at length stood out remarkably from the rest of the student cohort. These students were thoroughly prepared and were able to maintain and advance the discussion appropriately and effectively; the discussion was maintained, and texts and resources studied were used to support ideas and opinions. The students demonstrated sound knowledge and appreciation of their topic and skilfully expressed and elaborated on ideas and opinions. They had also mastered the linguistic elements of the language and used an excellent range of vocabulary and grammatical structures effectively.

However, most students did not provide enough evidence of their in-depth research. Some students were able to talk very generally about their chosen topic, but specific questions about their research revealed lack of preparation for the task, and responses to questions tended to be superficial. Responses were repetitive and meaningful dialogue was difficult because the students did not elaborate on their topic.

More than half of the student cohort chose 'Migration' as their topic, followed by the topic 'A famous Greek person'. If planned carefully, these topics have a lot to offer. However, in the majority of cases, tasks were dealt with in a very superficial way and there was little evidence of research. This made it especially difficult for examiners to conduct a meaningful discussion with students. Overall students who chose their own topic performed much better than those who shared a common theme.

The problems that candidates encountered with the use of the language were similar to the issues that arose in the conversation. When discussing the In-depth Study, inadequate preparation highlighted students' language difficulties. The more successful candidates were clear and their responses dealt with information thoroughly. These students 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 displayed limited language skills. They had difficulty in explaining and discussing their tasks and used very simple language and repetitive responses.

It would be beneficial to students if teachers worked closely with the students guiding them carefully in their choice of a topic for the In-depth Study. Tasks need to be agreed on in collaboration with students at an early stage, to give them plenty of time to research, prepare their written component, and practise their discussion.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

General comments

Section 2, Reading and Responding, Part A, proved the most difficult for students this year. It is evident that students were not fully prepared to critically analyse and evaluate texts. This is an area where teachers need to work with students over time, and carefully prepare questions that allow for these types of responses, rather than merely translating texts or requiring content-based answers.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Overall, this section was answered very well with an average mean mark of approximately 70%. Generally, students were able to convey the information accurately and appropriately. However, to prepare adequately for this section, students need to spend more time practising listening comprehension skills. It is evident that questions which require critical and analytical thinking are challenging for many students. Although they can very easily identify information, these students experience difficulties when analysing information and using it to correctly respond to the questions. On almost every occasion, students indicated an understanding of the texts heard, but they had difficulty in critically analysing and conveying this information in English.

In this section of the examination, there were five unrelated texts of varying lengths and text types. For all texts, the questions and answers were in English.

Text 1

The question asked students to identify the reason for the phone call, but many students translated the text almost word-for-word. More than half the students did not correctly translate 'βιογραφικό' as CV, but instead said that Costa wanted to write his biography. Others incorrectly translated 'μαθήματα ηλεκτρονικών υπολογιστών' as lessons in electronic calculators.

Text 2

This text proved the easiest for the students with both questions answered very well.

Text 3

Question 3 (a)

Most students answered Question 3 (a) quite well and they were able to identify the reasons why Anna chose the Mediterranean sea lion.

Question 3 (b)

Question 3 (b) proved more difficult than question 3 (a) as students were not able to identify the key reasons, but simply quoted what Anna was saying.

Text 4

A reasonable number of students were able to respond accurately to this text. However, a great number did not identify Haiti, although they made reference to an earthquake and to 'that country'. Again, the less successful responses included a

translation of information about the devastation of the earthquake without addressing the question.

Text 5

This question was answered very well, with a vast majority of students gaining full marks.

Overall, most students were able to respond correctly to question 5 (b), and responses were more successful when students supported their answer with evidence from the text.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

This section proved the most difficult for students this year with a mean score of approximately 60%.

To be successful, it is important that students read the questions carefully and look to the number of marks allocated for that question. This is a good indication of the length of the anticipated answer and how many points to look for. Students also need to be reminded that they are required to answer in sentences and to avoid dot point answers.

The more successful candidates were able to analyse the texts and answer the questions appropriately in complete sentences. Many of the students, however, experienced difficulties with specific aspects of text analysis.

Generally, students coped very well with summarising information but experienced difficulty when required to analyse information (for example, compare and/or contrast). Evaluating information was the area where students experience the greatest difficulty.

Text 1

This text outlined the significance of the olive tree in Greece through the ages to the present day. While it still proved difficult, this was the better-answered of the two texts with a mean score of approximately 64%. Students are encouraged to analyse what the question is asking for, and to use a dictionary when needed.

Question 6 (a)

Many students did not understand the term 'spiritual' and many wrote about the importance of the olive in ancient Greece. Other students incorrectly referred to a 'κωνίλι' as a candle rather than an oil lamp.

Question 6 (b)

This question proved very challenging. Many students covered some aspects, but did not cover all of the key points or support their answer with evidence from the text. Some only wrote about present-day uses of olive oil and based their entire answer on food and/or health.

Text 7

This text focused mainly on the disadvantages of watching television and the role it plays on our lives. This text proved the most difficult to answer in this section, with a mean score of approximately 55%.

Question 7 (a)

The majority of students had difficulty answering this question and did not know how to structure their answer. Many could see the negatives and so gave an account of the negatives of watching too much television. A few students picked up on the author's statement that watching sport is possibly not a bad thing. A very small minority gained full marks in this question.

Question 7 (b)

This question did not appear a difficult one, yet there were many students who were confused about the last line of the text, or who used their own background knowledge and answered the question incorrectly.

Question 7 (c)

The term 'καραμέλες' was either well-understood or completely misunderstood, so that students either received full marks or no marks. The interpretation of this term showed that students could not see beyond the literal translation of this word; many referred to 'lollies' in their answer, but only in the sense that viewers eat lollies when they watch TV.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

The stimulus in this section was an advertisement informing people of an annual school festival. Students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of the text and their ability to convey information accurately and appropriately. Their task was to write an email to a friend reflecting on their contribution and the contributions of their classmates to the success of the festival. Only a very small minority of students answered this section well, and the overall mean was approximately 63%.

Some observations

Many responses fell short of the word-count of 200 to 250 words, indicating that students found this task challenging. Students relied heavily on using information directly from the text, with the entire opening paragraph copied verbatim in many papers. Many students felt they had to follow the exact sequencing of the information in the text in their attempt to answer the question.

The majority of students evidently understood the text but had difficulties with the requirements of the question. Many reflected on their contribution but did not discuss the contributions of their classmates. However, a number of students misread or misunderstood the question and, instead of reflecting on a past event, wrote in the future tense about how they *will be* participating at the festival. In a small number of cases the wrong text type was used and students wrote a letter rather than an email, indicating the need for more care to be taken in reading the question.

A very wide range of abilities was demonstrated in this section, with written expression key. The more successful students were able to organise their information very well in a logical and sequential way, were original and able to use authentic vocabulary. The less successful responses clearly lacked depth and minimal information was provided. Sentence structure and expression are clearly areas of weakness for many students. A limited range of vocabulary was also evident in many papers, with students relying very heavily on the vocabulary provided in the text, and in many cases using it incorrectly.

Grammatical observations

Students are encouraged to be careful about the following areas:

- agreement of nouns and adjectives
- articles
- verb tenses
- dates
- letters.

Section 3: Writing In Modern Greek

Three choices were provided this year, and students were asked to write between 250 and 300 words in Modern Greek on one of the topics. Each topic represented a different text type and style of writing. The average mean score for this section was approximately 70%. Questions 9 and 10 were the most popular choices with 45% of the students choosing question 10 and 42 % choosing question 9. Only 12% chose question 11.

Question 9

This was a popular choice and the mean score for this question was approximately 63%. The most successful responses were creative, competent, and described the student's city or town well, while at the same time adhering to the conventions of the text type. The letters were mostly fluent and logical although but the less successful responses demonstrated that students had some difficulty in expressing their ideas, produced writing which lacked depth, and repeated themselves frequently.

Question 10

Almost the same number of students as question 9 attempted this question, but responses to this question were more successful, with a mean score of approximately 72%. It was apparent that the students who answered this question had a personal experience of part-time work and study, as their responses were original and very convincing. Their writing contained a good range of vocabulary, complex expression, and sentence structures.

The less successful responses did not effectively analyse the advantages and disadvantages and dealt with part-time jobs in general. Many did not address the question, used language that was very basic, and did not organise ideas well.

Question 11

A few ambitious students chose to write a narrative account and nearly all of them answered the question very successfully. They were able to incorporate the sentence 'My legs froze!' in a natural and creative manner, using authentic vocabulary.

General observations

It is important that teachers help students 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 need to be covered with students as stated in the curriculum statement, so that students are aware of the features of each. It was evident that many students were not aware of the features of an article as required in question 10, for example. Teachers must impress upon the students that they must not identify themselves or their school in their writing.

Grammatical and syntactical observations

Students are reminded to be careful in their use of:

- articles
- verb endings
- agreement of adjectives and nouns
- tenses, especially past continuous and past perfect
- word choice/vocabulary
- punctuation, for example, accent marks.

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