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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In German (6GN04) Paper 01

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Summer 2017

Publications Code 6GN04_01_1706_ER

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Students responded well to the paper. The translation was well approached, and students were able to demonstrate their ability in Q2. Most students chose to discuss refugees, with a large minority considering freedom of speech. Many students demonstrated thorough research and a high level of understanding in Q3. As ever, the majority of students had studied a film, play or novel, and a significant minority had studied a historical period.

Question 1 Translation

Generally speaking, students approached this translation thoughtfully, and showed some flexibility and adaptability in expressing unfamiliar items of lexis. Tenses, however, caused a number of problems for the majority of students. This would be an area for future improvement, in the new specification as well as in the last session of the legacy specification. Some students, including those whose German was otherwise of a high standard, used the present tense throughout.

Section 1: Most students were able to communicate the sense of this section effectively and mainly grammatically, and many were able to translate it well, including complex elements. A number of translations of 'options' were accepted, including *Optionen*, *Möglichkeiten* and *Alternativen*. Many students were able to translate had as *hatte* and 'could' as *konnte* but a significant *proportion* used *hat* and *könnte*, which were felt to convey the wrong meanings.

Section 2: Most students were able to communicate the essential information in this section, with simple elements reasonably well translated. Complex elements in this section proved more challenging, although many students did rise to that challenge. The main lexical challenges were 'keep quiet' and 'innocent'. A few students knew *schweigen*, but most used *nichts sagen* or, even more commonly, *leise / stumm / still / ruhig bleiben*. Many students were able to come up with *unschuldig / nicht schuldig / schuldlos*. A number of students used a phrase such as, *nichts getan hatte*. These alternatives were considered to communicate. A large minority of students used words such as *ungeduldig / ungültig / unmöglich* or simply left a gap. These were considered to communicate something entirely different. A pleasing number of students were able to communicate 'in case' effectively, although only a minority chose *falls*. Word order and subject-verb agreements were generally well handled, but tenses were often mistranslated, and this often resulted in miscommunication. The pluperfect was rarely used. Very few students recognised the need for the dative with *Polizei*.

Section 3: Most students were able to communicate essential information with simple elements reasonably well translated. Many students struggled with the complex tenses in this element. The pluperfect was rarely used, and the present was often used. The question tag was often translated literally, rather than idiomatically, as *oder* or *nicht wahr* even by students who seemed to have native or near-native ability. Again, word order was generally good, and 'morally wrong' was generally successfully communicated. The phrase, 'Tobias had killed the man' caused a few more problems, aside from the tense. Many students were able to use

umgebracht / ermordet / getötet and some decided to adopt a belt and braces approach with *zum Tod umgebracht / zum Tod gekillt*. Others came close with *gestorben / zu Tod gestorben*. However, only a very small minority of students realised that the correct translation used the accusative *den Mann*. Almost all used *der Mann*, which does, of course, change the meaning quite significantly.

Section 4: This section was kept deliberately short to focus on the use of Konjunktiv I in reported speech. A minority of students used it, and a significant proportion of these appeared to be able non-native speakers. It may be time to lay Konjunktiv I to rest. Most students communicated the sense, and a reasonable proportion recognised the need for the pluperfect in this shorter section.

Section 5: This section contained quite significant complexity, and students generally attempted it well, although again, tenses were disappointing. Most students were able to communicate most of the essential meaning, although 'pocket' was surprisingly problematic. Most students did know *Tasche*, with some specifying, *Hosentasche* or *Jackentasche*, which were acceptable variants. One candidate translated it as *Hosenloch*, which shows admirable lateral thinking, but did not quite communicate the right concept! Some students used *Tüte*, which again did not communicate effectively, and a number used *Pocket*. In such a complex element, one incorrect item of lexis was tolerated, but *Pocket* did seem unsatisfactory. *Das Nummer* was far more common than the correct *die Nummer*. 'Inspector' was often translated as *Inspektors*, which was acceptable, but students also came up with *Kommissars*, *Detektiven*, *Polizisten* and even *Ermittlers* and *Beamten* on occasion. A pleasing number of students recognised the need for the genitive here. Most students had a reasonable stab at *gutaussiehenden*, although there were a number of variants, most commonly along the lines of, *gut aussiehten*. A number of students avoided these pitfalls by using *schönen* or *hübschen*. These were both felt to communicate effectively.

Tenses and verbs were again problematic. Most students realised that they needed a form of *nehmen* but there were a range of interesting variants. Equally, most students realised that they needed to use a form of *warten*, although some chose *erwarten* which communicated something different. Most students chose a variant of *anrufen* for 'dialling' although only a few used a correct variant. Although strictly speaking, one would use *anrufen* for a person not a number, examiners were tolerant. Some students used *eingab* or *eintippte*, and quite a few used *telefonierte*.

Very few students realised that they needed to use the accusative *einen Moment*.

Many students realised that they needed to re-order the sentence considerably. A pleasing proportion arrived at a correct word order. Many used *bevor* with correct word order, adding the subject. A number used an infinitive clause, which was less successful. A significant minority used *vor*, which was also less pleasing. Overall, students' attempts at the complexity in this section were pleasing.

Question 2

Overall, Q2 was well done. Examiners felt that students were more focused this year on answering the question, and students seemed enthusiastic about the topics available. As ever, however, there were one or two students who wrote a considerable amount on slightly related areas.

There was a wide range of quality of language from apparently native speakers to a few students whose German had hardly progressed from GCSE standard. The best students produced a wide range of complex structures with many different subordinating clauses, subjunctives, a range of tenses, passives, connectives, etc. together with an impressive array of appropriate lexis and synonyms for the topic under discussion. At the other end of the scale, students used much more straightforward sentence structures perhaps with one or two familiar subordinators like *weil* or *dass* but not necessarily with the correct word order. Verb endings also seem to be a mystery to some and it was not unusual to find repeated inconsistency in the wrong endings used with the same subject. However, most students had made progress from AS and did have the necessary vocabulary to write about the topic they had chosen. Indeed the best students had a far-reaching vocab base on the topics.

Q2(a)

A small number of students approached this question. The strongest responses produced a dialogue which had suspense and structure, and which effectively sketched a relationship. Some students introduced an element of humour. One candidate, for example, started the essay with the given prompt, *Schatz ... äh ... ich habe heute ein Tigerbaby gekauft* and the beautiful response: *Nicht schon wieder!*

The majority of responses lacked direction or structure, and seemed often implausible. Some responses did not begin with the given prompt, or did not follow the instruction to continue the dialogue.

Q2(b)

This was, as usual, the most popular of the creative essay options. The strongest students produced exciting and original stories, which provided a tense, atmospheric account of the difficult night, and portrayed a realistic ray of hope. However, on the whole there was a lack of tension or a struggle to convey a sense of tension/panic/fear. One or two stories related to what happened the day or evening before with little or no reference to the night and did not indicate why there was now renewed hope.

Q2(c)

Very few students attempted this question. Those who did, appeared to be predominantly aeroplane enthusiasts, who gave detailed information about the type of aeroplane and the nature of the fault, but often missed the human interest element of the story. In this question, examiners expect students to use features of newspaper reports, such as attention grabbing introductions, human interest, a representation of the drama of the event, quotations from those concerned ... Students had a weak grasp of geography, with the Alps appearing between Rome and Madrid, the Pacific between Helsinki and Munich, meadows in the Amazon and Atlantic, oceans convenient for water landings in mid continent ... Whilst examiners are not testing geography, they are testing the organisation and development of

the report. In this case, this included a degree of consistency, rather than a flow of consciousness.

Q2(d)

A minority of students chose this option, and those who did tended to have thought deeply about belief / beliefs, or to have strong belief / beliefs. The strongest responses focused clearly on the role of a variety of different beliefs or belief systems in our lives, and what would be left without these beliefs. A significant proportion of students wrote generic responses contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of religion, which was a less successful approach. A minority of students seemed to interpret *Glauben* as the ability to think.

Q2(e)

This was a popular choice of essay. The strongest examples focused clearly on the question of whether it is always a good idea to exercise our right to express our opinions, discussing democracy, censorship and situations which limit our freedoms. These students tended also to recognise that there are times when we should be sensitive to others, and that freedom of speech is the right to express political views rather than to insult or abuse others.

A significant proportion of students used the opportunity to argue for and against freedom of speech generally, without considering limitations on this freedom, or occasions when it might or might not be a good idea to exercise it.

Q2(f)

This was by far the most popular choice of essay. The strongest responses focused on the specific question asked, and considered the extent to which we should help refugees, who 'we' are (British, Germans, Europeans, wealthy countries), various different forms of help, and any other conditions or limitations that might be placed on this help. These strong responses often mentioned the Geneva Convention, and the legal duties countries have to help those displaced by war. They also distinguished between refugees and 'migrants' in general. Some students considered offering help in the refugees' own countries as a way of reducing the numbers fleeing to Europe.

A significant proportion of students wrote general essays on the advantages and disadvantages of accepting immigrants. This was a less successful strategy.

A majority of students referred to the terrible situation in Syria (only a few mentioned natural disasters), the need for safety and basic human rights, the fact that refugees are human beings like us and we would want help in a similar situation, etc. Most students also considered that, although refugees can eventually contribute to the economy one of the main counter arguments is the cost of help. They also considered the perception that refugees take jobs and housing from local people, the fear of terrorism and general prejudice against foreigners. A substantial minority of responses answers were clichéd, as they listed stereotypes against refugees without

any real substantiation. These responses also tended to argue that it was acceptable to help refugees because they would do jobs that we don't want to do for really low wages – that is, that we should allow people who have lost their homes and families in war into our countries so that we can exploit them. Fortunately, the majority of students took a more humane view.

Some responses were well argued, but a majority presented advantages, disadvantages and came to a conclusion which did not follow from their argument.

Q2(g)

Only a small proportion of students responded to this question. At the time of writing, it was envisioned that students would refer to the increasing number of pop concerts given to raise money for those suffering the effects of catastrophes such as earthquakes in distant parts of the world. In the light of events in Manchester and London just before the examination was sat, most students referred to the One Love concert in Manchester, and were considering events much closer to home.

Most of the essays gave a balanced view between concerts as *Katastrophenhilfe* being ridiculous or the best way of helping; the strongest responses were able to give specific evidence of the benefits of these concerts in real terms. Other responses successfully considered the positive effects of a concert in terms of community spirit and improved mood on those coming to terms with what happened, and the negative effects of apparent joy so soon after traumatic events. The pros and cons of various charitable events were discussed by some, including the question of whether the motives of the artists was always selfless as there was popularity to be gained, but the vast majority felt that such events were more positive than negative.

Question 3

Question 3 produced the usual mix of very well researched work which demonstrated clear understanding and responded thoughtfully to the question that was set, students who wrote the essay they had prepared whether it was relevant or not, responses which revealed a lack of preparation, and responses which were off specification. Those students who were off specification referred to places not in Germany; fictional works as historical events; modern events in the historical period; historical figures in the modern period and works of fiction which were not of German origin.

Quality of Language is usually reasonably high in Q3, although a number of students produce fluent German in a spoken rather than written register. Some students appear to stick closely to pre-prepared work, and these students might do well to sacrifice one or two language marks in order to produce work which more directly answers the question.

Q3(a)

As usual, only a small number of students chose this question. The majority of those who did choose it, had researched a city (Berlin, Hamburg, Zürich) or town. Regions included Rheinland-Pfalz, Bayern, das

Saarland, das Salzkammergut. The strongest responses were thoroughly researched, well structured, and dealt effectively with economic challenges in the region and how they are being mastered.

However, as usual, students tended to write general information about the city or area (location/population /main industries/history), with little or no obvious research, and without focussing on the question. Often students were not able to state economic challenges. Many students did not respond at all to the second part of the question, answered it with merely one sentence or gave the answer in the introduction. A few students simply wrote that there were no economic challenges in their studied area.

Virtually all students struggled to write about the economy in a relevant way as a properly researched subject. The few more successful responses spoke about tourism that can't grow because of airport capacities (Berlin), refugees and some environmental changes that lead to economic challenges.

Q3(b)

This was a reasonably popular question. Very strong responses managed to select relevant *political* events in the chosen era, give reasons why these were important and discuss the effects of these events for the state. These strong responses often considered political consequences, and focused on how their chosen event affected the development of the German state: for instance, the unification under Bismarck, the development and collapse of the Weimar Republic, the foundation and collapse of the Third Reich, the division of Germany into two politically opposed states, or the collapse of the DDR leading to the reunification of Germany.

A significant majority of responses were quite well developed and showed very clear evidence of research. Many students were able to describe events in a sophisticated way but were less able to evaluate their effects, or tended to evaluate their effects as relating to social or economic life.

Most essays were about the "Zeitraum der DDR" or 1933-1939. Students often the introduction of policies (kommunistische Planwirtschaft/Einheitspolitik), laws, or processes rather than events. More successful choices were Kristallnacht, Mauerbau and Mauerfall, Volksaufstand 1953, occupation of the Ruhr area after WWI. Sometimes the period that had been studied was not mentioned. A significant number wrote about historical leaders rather than political events. Those dealing with Nazi Germany tended to write in terms of Hitler as a person rather than talking about important events.

A significant minority of responses explained and analysed the whole period that had been studied and/or described the events/reasons that led to the important events at such length that there was not much word count left for the second part of the question.

These essays also sometimes had the argument: "without these events the development/history of the state would be very different" without much more analysis. One candidate wrote about his/her personal experience of WWII, and another wrote a general discussion of what history is.

Q3(c)

As usual, this question was the least popular. Most of the responses which were within the specification considered Angela Merkel to be the most important figure in modern German society. Stronger responses displayed evidence of research beyond general knowledge, and some considered that Merkel was important because of the leadership she has shown in responding to challenges such as the refugee crisis, and in re-establishing Germany as a humane and moral land.

However, a significant minority of responses were quite superficial, and some of these took the opportunity to rehash arguments about whether or not to help refugees, rather than focusing on why Merkel's decisions made her the most important figure.

The modern period is felt to begin with the reunification of Germany, and answers which consider historical or fictional figures are off specification. It was evident that many students who attempted this question were not aware of the requirements of the specification. Responses included: Bismarck's importance; the importance of Anne Frank for Frankfurt, the Swiss governmental system, Schiller, Sebastian Kneipp, Alfred Escher, Munich, and, most unusually, "Die Disziplin der Gemeinschaft", with secondary roles allotted to Adolf Hitler and Franz Beckenbauer.

Q3(d)

This was by far the most popular choice. There were very strong responses which demonstrated a deep understanding of the work studied, and which focused on how the most important themes of the work were realised through the plot. Some students also considered how the themes were realised through a variety of techniques.

Most students were able to use their knowledge and research to relate to the question to some extent and to use quotations and examples to justify their points and move the analysis forward.

Successful essays generally began with a short introduction stating the work (and author or director) and giving a short (usually one sentence) reference to the plot and the chosen themes. In general, the strongest responses managed to use scenes and quotations without too much narrative.

A worrying proportion of students did not seem to know what *Handlung* meant. This is a fundamental item of lexis for anyone studying a work of film or literature.

Other less successful strategies included: listing all the themes without considering which were the most important; confusing story arcs with themes; narrating the whole plot; discussing characters and their aims (which was last year's question), or writing everything they could think of relating to the work. Some students wrote essays which were closer to book reviews than to literature essays – strong on opinions and flowery language, and short on the kind of analysis, evaluation and literary discourse which attracts marks.

A substantial proportion of responses had an overlong introduction and limited analysis or significant narrative. The choice of theme(s) was very important. Not all essays stated the themes explicitly. Some students wrote about the aims of the author, or how stylistic means helped to realise the themes. Few students dealt competently and solely with the question in terms of plot. The verb "verwirklicht" in the rubric was not always understood.

Some students selected works which did not lend themselves to analysis and evaluation. These students were not well advised on what film or book to choose for their exam.

The most popular choices were "Good-bye Lenin", "Das Leben der Anderen" (the 'Appassionata scene' was very commonly mentioned, but not usually very well handled in terms of Wiesler's changing behaviour) and "Der Besuch der alten Dame" (often well done – revenge and justice). Other choices included "Der Vorleser", "Die Welle" (students struggled to write about themes), "Biedermann und die Brandstifter", "Die Physiker", "Ich fühle mich so fifty-fifty", "norway.today", "Woyzeck", a teenage saga "Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch", and "Homo Faber".

A few students selected 'Merry Christmas', a film difficult to determine whether it fits the specification as it is a joint effort by the Germans, Scottish and French and contains English, German, French and Latin.

A number of students wrote about works which were not originally German, such as the Harry Potter series. These responses are off specification.

Section C There was one essay about animal experiments, which had no bearing to any of the questions set for Q3.

