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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Russian (9RU0)
Paper 1: Listening, Reading and Translation

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Content of the examination

Candidates were assessed on their understanding of spoken and written Russian from a variety of types of authentic texts and listening material, as well as their ability to translate accurately from Russian into English. Texts and recordings varied in length to include some extended passages. All spoken and written materials were culturally relevant to Russia and Russian-speaking countries and communities, and were drawn from four themes: Развитие российского общества, Политическая и художественная культура в русскоязычном мире, Москва или Санкт-Петербург – Изменения в жизни российского города and Последние годы СССР – М. С. Горбачёв (1985-1991).

Candidates were given the opportunity to understand main points, gist and detail from spoken and written material; infer meaning from complex spoken and written material; assimilate and use information from spoken and written sources, including material from online media; summarise information from spoken sources, reporting key points and subject matter; and to translate from Russian into English.

The total assessment time was 2 hours. The assessment was out of 80 marks. Candidates had to answer all questions. The use of dictionaries was not permitted.

Listening

The listening section was made up of spoken passages covering different registers and types, including authentic communication involving one or more speakers. Sources included material from online media.

Question 1 (four marks) used an extract from a young person's vlog about their diary. There were four multiple-choice questions, set in Russian.

Candidates generally found this question accessible and performed well.

Question 2 (five marks) was an extract from a documentary film about Perestroika. There were four questions in Russian, to be answered in Russian. Full sentences were not required.

Candidates generally responded well to this question. For Q2(a), it was essential to include the words Советский Союз in the response, otherwise the reader might incorrectly infer that it was Perestroika which was politically or economically ineffective. In Q2(b), some candidates noted some achievement of Gorbachev, but then failed to indicate what the speaker's attitude towards this was. Q2(c) was generally answered well, although few candidates succeeded in spelling прекратил correctly. The spelling прикратил was accepted. There were four possible correct answers, of which candidates had to give two; the four possibilities were equally popular. Q2(d) was generally answered successfully, although a few candidates failed to use the third person in their responses, writing нас кто-то назвал «дети перестройки».

Question 3 (nine marks) was an extract from an interview with the actor Aleksandra Nikiforova. Candidates had to respond in Russian to nine questions in Russian. Full sentences were not required.

Candidates mostly responded very well to these questions. Q3(a) required the candidate to express the idea that Aleksandra had done well at school. It was not enough simply to state that she found learning easy. However, an answer such as ей было легко учиться на отлично was accepted. In Q3(б) the key element was that she had won a competition, which is what most candidates wrote. Q3(в) and Q3(г) were successfully answered by most candidates. Most candidates in Q3(д) successfully noted that she worked from 6 to 8 hours, but a number wrote just the number 6 or the number 8, which was inadequate. A few expressed the idea that she worked from 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock, which was clearly wrong. In Q3(е), most candidates noted that she worked or studied; a few wrongly specified that she did some particular kind of work, such as housework. For Q3(ж), the most popular response was город другой, but the alternative correct answers were also seen frequently. Q3(з) and Q3(и) were generally answered well.

Question 4 (twelve marks) required candidates to respond to six questions in Russian and to make two brief summaries in Russian. The text contained an extract from a documentary film which recounted an attempted robbery from the royal palace in St Petersburg and was delivered in two sections.

The questions were generally answered accurately. Q4(a)(i) posed problems for some candidates, who either wrote the wrong year in figures, or unnecessarily tried to write 1844 in words, but then spelled the words wrongly or ambiguously. A few candidates misread the question as В каком городе rather than В каком году. In Q4(a)(ii), most candidates answered correctly, but some misread the question as В какое время года rather than В какое время дня. Q4(a)(iii) was answered quite well, but a number of candidates did not realise that they needed to write what Karpova was doing when the thief arrived, rather than what she did after he had arrived. In Q4(a)(iv), most candidates understood that the thief was after money. For Q4(a)(v), candidates either noted what Karpova had said she was going to do, or wrote what she actually intended to do: to seek help. Both possibilities were accepted. For Q4(a)(vi), most candidates responded correctly, but a few thought that the thief robbed items from the room he was in.

The vast majority of candidates completed the summary task Q4(б) very well indeed. They correctly gave a number of relevant facts and thereby created a viable summary, which is what the task requires. A few candidates omitted to respond to the bullet point about Karpova, and so missed out on that mark. Others noted material from part (i) in their response to part (ii). This was not credited, since the task for part (ii) specifically required a summary of what the woman speaker said, not what the man had said earlier.

Reading

The reading section was made up of texts containing both factual and abstract content and was authentic or adapted from authentic sources. The texts included

contemporary, historical, literary, fiction and non-fiction, written for different purposes and audiences.

Question 5 (four marks) was an online article about the festival of Navruz, and required candidates to respond to four multiple choice questions set in Russian.

They generally did so successfully.

Question 6 (four marks) was a text about mass media and young people. Candidates were offered a list of statements in Russian from which they had to select the four true ones.

This question was done very well on the whole, with most candidates achieving three or four marks.

Question 7 (six marks) was a text about the reconstruction of the streets and squares of central Moscow. There were six questions to answer in Russian. Full sentences were not required.

Candidates responded with varying degrees of success, and this proved quite a demanding question for some. In Q7(a), most candidates responded correctly. In Q7(б), number of candidates incorrectly wrote водителям or even проектировщикам, while others wrote пешеходам и водителям, the second element of which invalidated the first. Q7(в) was most often answered successfully with a phrase such as программа очень успешна or программа довольно успешна, but the single word answer успешна was considered to be inadequate for a mark. Q7(г) was correctly answered in many different ways, and most candidates got the idea that walking down the narrow streets was being compared with walking in single file in a prison. Some students mentioned just the pavement, rather than what it has to do with the prison and what the connection is. The most popular answer for Q7(д) was на улицы, где фонари освещают всю улицу, but the other possible answers were also seen. In Q7(е), both alternative responses were equally popular.

Question 8 (eight marks) contained eight questions to be answered in Russian. The text was an article in which the writer described how she lived through the days of the putsch from 19 to 21 August, 1991. Although full sentences were not required, candidates were expected to give all information that was relevant to a full answer.

In Q8(a), most candidates understood that the news was heard on the radio. In Q8(б), the most popular responses were с ужасом or негативно. In Q8(в), most candidates understood that someone had shouted that there was a barricade; a few noted that someone had gone out onto the street, but failed to write that they had shouted.

Q8(г) caused problem for some candidates, who did not include the key element that the woman did not like the fact that she was being told where and when to go, and that this was what caused her strong reaction. In Q8(д), the key point was that she purchased medicine, and most candidates wrote this. A number made a connection with the previous sentence in the text without fully explaining her purpose in going to the chemist's, which is what the question required. A few wrongly surmised that she had gone to visit the friend who was

mentioned in the text. Q8(е) was answered successfully by many candidates, with several using a phrase such as как место, где можно защитникам отдохнуть. For Q8(ж), the essential point was that the writer was happy, and most candidates were able to express this satisfactorily. Most candidates found Q8(з) difficult, even though the word путч features in the list of themes and sub-themes in the Specification. The most common correct definitions were переворот, восстание and нелегальный захват власти, although several other plausible possibilities were accepted. Among the many wrong definitions given were забастовка and протест. It appeared that many candidates had no idea what a putsch was, and some tried unsuccessfully to surmise from the text what the definition might be.

Question 9 (eight marks) contained a literary text: an extract from the memoirs of Anna Grigorievna Dostoevskaya. It contained eight questions to be answered in Russian.

Many candidates found at least some parts of this question demanding, as one would expect. A few candidates used the first person in their answers, which was not appropriate. Some manipulation of the original text is expected. Q9(а) was answered well, although a few candidates wrote that the period was 14 years rather than four. Some copied from the text после четырёхлетнего пребывания, which did not meet the requirement for candidates to use their own words, and did not directly answer the question. In Q9(б), most candidates correctly wrote поездом or на поезде, but some gave вокзал as an answer, which is not a form of transport and so could not be accepted. In Q9(в), most correctly wrote в соборе святой Троицы or в церкви, but a few wrote just Троицы, which was inadequate. Some incorrectly wrote за границей. Q9(г) was generally answered well, although some candidates copied out много тяжёлого, много затруднений, which again did not meet the requirement for candidates to use their own words, and so was not accepted. Q9(д) was answered successfully by those who understood that they manipulate the text to use the third person; answers such as она надеется, что Бог нас не оставит were not accepted. In Q9(е), most candidates correctly noted that their dream had been realised when they returned home; a few thought that the dream had been to live abroad. Nearly all candidates answered Q9(ж) correctly. In Q9(з), it was important to express the idea that the 'family event' was the birth of a son. Many candidates simply wrote это семейное «событие» благополучно совершилось, which was insufficient for an answer.

Translation into English

Question 10 was a translation task whose content dealt with the subject of the circus. The text was divided into twenty sections, each worth one mark. A translation was regarded as successful if an English speaker could understand it without having understood the text in its original language. Variants on the acceptable answers proposed in the mark scheme were accepted if they conveyed the same intended meaning.

Many candidates found this a challenging task, and only very few achieved full marks. Candidates sometimes got close to the correct meaning, but then wrote the wrong tense, or wrote a plural instead of a singular, or misspelled a word in such a way that its meaning became ambiguous, or else they omitted words. A

few apparently had not read the rubric, and did not understand that цирк meant 'circus'. It should be noted that the word цирк also features in the list of themes and sub-themes in the Specification. The majority of vocabulary and structures contained within the text appeared to be generally accessible, with only a few particular words causing problems for candidates. Some candidates gave alternative variants of translations for particular words. These generally did not gain marks, unless the choice was between two synonyms, such as 'child' and 'kid'.

There were some fairly common difficulties, including веселье, which was sometimes omitted, and особенности. Various translations were accepted for this word, including 'particularities' and 'what is special about'. Few candidates wrote 'most often' for чаще всего, with most giving 'usually', 'more often' or simply 'often'. Some short words were omitted by candidates, such as а, и and но. The word мастерство was sometimes rendered by non-English words based on the root 'master', while искусство was sometimes rendered as 'artfulness' or other inappropriate compounds of 'art'. These were not accepted. In the final paragraph, a fair number of candidates wrote the wrong year for 1764, while others spelled 'Moscow' in such a way as to make the sense ambiguous. The word английский was sometimes erroneously rendered as 'British'. For нескольких, examiners accepted translations such as 'several', 'a few', 'some', 'a number of' and 'multiple', but not 'few' or 'a couple of'. Only the very best responses translated зрелище as 'spectacle', у зрителей as 'in the audience' and с гастролями as 'on tour'.

Summary

Based on performance in this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Ensure you use a decent black pen and make your handwriting as legible as possible.
- You may do rough work on the blank pages of the question paper, or in the white spaces. Rough work must be crossed out, so that there is no ambiguity about what needs to be marked and what needs to be ignored.
- Time your work carefully, ensuring that you leave enough time to do the Translation.
- For Q2, Q3 and Q4, you may respond using single words, short phrases or sentences.
- For Q7, Q8 and Q9, you may respond using short phrases or sentences. You may use words from the texts, but you must not copy whole sections. Sometimes, phrases from the text need to be manipulated from first person to third person.
- Even though full sentences are not required, you are expected to give all information that is relevant to a full answer. Be aware that sometimes what you hear or read first is not necessarily the correct answer. Make sure that you respond to both parts of two-mark questions.
- For the Translation (Q10), avoid omitting words. Do not leave gaps, since no marks are awarded for blank spaces. Read the rubric carefully, as it gives a hint as to the content of the text. Check that your English is grammatically correct and that each sentence makes sense. Be very careful about details such as tenses, singulars and plurals.

- Avoid giving alternative variants of answers; select the one which you wish the examiner to consider.

