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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Russian (1RU0) Paper 1H: Listening and
Understanding in Russian

Higher tier

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE in Russian (1RU0) Paper 1H:

Listening and Understanding in Russian – Higher tier

Introduction

This Higher Tier examination is made up of 10 questions with a total of 50 marks.

The examination is 40 minutes long with 5 minutes reading time.

The paper draws on vocabulary and structures across all themes and topics covered in this qualification specification. Candidates are assessed on their understanding of standard spoken Russian by one or more speakers in a range of public and social settings. Candidates will respond to multiple choice response and open response questions based on a recording featuring male and female Russian speakers.

The paper is divided into two sections A and B. Section A consists of 2 questions, both set in the target language and candidates in this section are required to respond in Russian. Section B consists of 8 questions to be answered in English.

The paper is based on five themes as per first teaching 2017 specification:

- 1) Identity and culture
- 2) Local area, holiday, travel
- 3) School
- 4) Future aspirations, study and work
- 5) International and global dimension.

All themes and related topics must be studied in the context of both the students' home country and that of countries and communities where Russian is spoken.

This Higher Tier paper covers awarding grades 3 to 9:

- questions 1 and 3 target grade 4
- questions 2 and 4 target grade 5
- questions 5 and 6 target grade 6
- question 7 targets grade 7
- question 8 targets grades 7-8
- question 9 targets grades 8-9
- question 10 targets grade 9

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 are crossover questions with the Foundation Tier question paper. Vocabulary for those question is taken from the Foundation MCV.

Generally, candidates were well prepared for both multiple-choice and open response test types but some requirements proved challenging for some candidates and the open response questions, requiring answers in English, proved daunting for less successful candidates and in many cases, heritage candidates. This is perhaps to be expected, as the level of challenge on the paper increases, the further through the paper candidates progress. Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some excellent performances. There was evidence of some good listening and exam skills. Many candidates had used the five minutes reading time well

(underlining key words in the title, rubric and questions, annotating questions), generally using the time to anticipate what they were about to hear. The questions that were intended to discriminate did so, many candidates understood enough, and felt confident enough, to attempt the whole paper, but there were blank spaces in the answer booklet for the whole or parts of questions 6, 7 and 9 (open response questions in English). There were some candidates who were unable to cope with the demands of the paper - the increase in difficulty as they progressed through led some to give up. These candidates would have possibly benefited from taking the Foundation rather than the Higher paper.

Comments on individual questions.

Questions 1-4 are overlap questions found on both the 1F and 1H papers and included the two questions in Russian. At Higher level, performance on these questions was generally better, but errors made were similar to those on the Foundation level paper.

Questions 1 and 2 were in the target language. Candidates seemed to find Question 1 more challenging, with some not understanding the rubric for this question. Items of vocabulary which were used but had not been supplied in the "bubble" could not be credited. Many were unable to use linguistic clues or context to arrive at the correct answer. This question requires an element of drawing inference, so candidates should be prepared to listening for clues in the text to steer them to a particular answer, which will not be identical to any word they hear in the text. For example, "джинсы, кроссовки, обувь, футболки" gives the candidate four chances to deduce that the answer for (d) was "одежды". The use of "Приятного аппетита!" (including a cognate) should steer candidates towards "кафе" for (e).

Question 2 proved less challenging. This task required candidates to process what they heard, understand inference and match this with a description of what pupils thought of their school, inserting a proper name to complete the answer.

Question 3 proved accessible for most candidates. Part 3 (i) proved challenging to some, with some candidates not able to link "первая поездка" with statement 3i) A – "a new experience". This multiple-choice question required careful listening to identify correct and incorrect options for each part of the question and also the ability to process information.

Question 4 required a basic ability to draw inference and was successfully answered by the majority of candidates.

Question 5 was multiple choice, and all questions were well answered by the majority of candidates. Parts (i) and (ii) required some understanding of inference. In each case, more than one "clue" was available. (Question (i) "рядом с моим домом" "не надо на транспорте ехать", Question (ii) "не нужно платить за билет", "вход ничего не стоит").

Question 8 is multiple choice and relied on candidates' ability to understand inference, this time for all answers. As this question is aimed at Grade 7/8 candidates, it should be expected that there will be a clear element of challenge. This will include frequent use of inference, items of low frequency vocabulary and grammatical structures and concepts from the Higher Tier Specification. Elements from the text are intended to clearly rule out options from the multiple choice statements, as well as steer

candidates towards the correct answers. All items of vocabulary used in this text appear in the MCV but, crucially, not all are tested. Often, more than one clue will be given to steer candidates towards the correct answer. Where possible cognates and semi-cognates will also be included to support candidates' choices of response. Examples in this text were "идеально", "группой", "популярно" "авторов", "блогов", "турист", "экскурсии".

Question 10 was testing candidates at Grade 9, the highest grade possible. Candidates can therefore expect the linguistic content and level of vocabulary to be more sophisticated and challenging than in previous questions. This will include frequent use of inference, items of low frequency vocabulary and grammatical structures and concepts from the Higher Tier Specification. All items of vocabulary used in this text appear in the MCV but, crucially, not all are tested. Often, more than one clue will be given to steer candidates towards the correct answer. Where possible cognates and semi-cognates will also be included to support candidates' choices of response. The emphasis is on drawing inference from a relatively long extract and candidates are advised not to approach this question as a translation exercise. Part (i) appears to have been marginally more accessible than Part (ii).

Questions 6, 7 and 9

As always, the open response questions requiring answers in English proved a good discriminator. There were some excellent performances from candidates on these questions but they proved difficult for some learner candidates as they reached their ceiling of competency. As in the past, some heritage candidates found the open response questions very challenging and have not been able to express themselves clearly enough in English to be awarded marks. Also, as in previous years, answers in Russian were not able to be awarded marks. Candidates' responses often indicated they had understood the gist of the extracts, although lack of attention to detail cost them marks. Only the most successful candidates were able to supply the detail and accuracy required at this level.

The incline in difficulty was evident - the majority of candidates attempted and scored on Question 6, but in Question 7 and Question 9 there were more blank spaces and some candidates failed to score. Where candidates did not understand the extract, many either looked for single lexical items that might fit the question or came up with answers that were not in the extract. Some common items of vocabulary were not known or confused with other words. It should be borne in mind that Question 7 targets Grade 7 and Question 9 Grades 8/9. However, all candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions. They should attempt to provide plausible answers to the questions set, insofar as it is reasonable to do so.

Question 6 involved a text set in the context of the Russian celebration Old New Year. Although the concept of this celebration may not have been familiar to candidates, the vocabulary tested was not exclusive to such a celebration, and candidates working at the grade this question was intended for were expected to find it accessible. This proved to be the case for a significant number of candidates. Question 6 (a) required a degree of accuracy beyond "a hundred years ago" and to gain the mark, candidates needed to demonstrate they had understood the significance of "больше, чем". 6 (b) was well answered, although a small number of candidates seemed not to have

understood "в деревне", which they perhaps confused with the word, "дерево", leading to their answer of "in the woods" or similar. Candidates had a choice of four words to secure the mark for 6 (c) and only a small number missed the cognate "десерт", instead plumping for "meat" or "fish", which was mentioned earlier in the text in relation to main courses. 6 (d) was perhaps the most challenging item on Question 6. Although "вспоминать" and "бегать по домам" may be considered "difficult" items of vocabulary, other options were on offer to secure the mark, provided candidates could identify "сидеть дома" or "забавно". Finally, 6 (e) was drawn from a section of the text which offered numerous options to secure the mark. The ability to identify the words "весело", "шумно" or "конфеты" would have done precisely that, while longer more involved answers, focussing on "running from house to house" and mentioning "neighbours" were also acceptable. This item, also attracted a number of creative paraphrases, such as "visiting neighbours" and "eating sweets", which were also credited.

Question 7, targeting grade 7 ability candidates, showed evidence of candidates finding the answers more challenging. A number of candidates were distracted by the opening statement "У городского университета" and assumed the website was intended for university students. Again, attention to detail was needed to secure the mark for 7 (a) "до 10 лет" was the target in the text and answers which conveyed "up to" were credited. 7 (b) 2 marks were on offer from 4 possibilities in the text. The majority of candidates scored on this item, with "asking questions" and "receiving answers" being the most popular options. Many candidates understood perfectly the sense of the phrase "зелёную жизнь" and included it in their answer. 7 (c) proved surprisingly challenging – the word "мультфильмы" seemed not to be known by a number of candidates and the answer "film" was not accepted. Question 7 (d) highlighted the need to read the question carefully. Candidates were asked to name a SPECIFIC environmental issue that the website focussed on. A number of candidates answered "global warming", which was mentioned earlier in the text. However, a pleasing number answered with a choice from three possibilities – "экономить энергию" (both words cognates), "перерабатывать мусор" or "думать о планете" (containing one high frequency verb and a cognate).

Question 9, targeting grades 8/9, proved to be a very good discriminator, as accuracy and attention to detail were the key to scoring well. This contained low frequency items of vocabulary, inference questions and ability to pick out key words from more dense passages of Russian. 9a (i) contained perhaps the single most challenging item of vocabulary on the paper. Almost all candidates understood from the question that they were required to supply an adjective to describe "city" or "town". Relatively few were able to supply the meaning of "промышленный". In addition to this there were a number of candidates who answered "1973" to the question "Where?" 9a (ii) was worth two marks and proved a very good discriminator. Many candidates secured one mark by recognising "мало внимания". In addition to supplying a literal translation there were many very pleasing answers which demonstrated that candidates had understood the sense of the Russian text, for example, "they favoured her brother", "they loved her brother more", "they spent more time on her brother". Answers which rephrased the sense of this could not be credited with the second mark, e.g "They paid little attention to her and preferred her brother". However, the most able candidates provided an answer which focussed on the word "образование" to secure the second

mark. 9a (iii) required candidates to pick the word from the cognate "спонсор" from the text to secure the mark, which the majority did. 9b (i) required a factual answer, drawing on the words "она замечательно училась". Again, attention to detail was required, and although candidates did not have to supply a direct equivalent of "замечательно", answers which contained nothing more than "well" or "good" were not credited. 9b (ii) elicited some really pleasing answers, again using creative paraphrasing. Candidates needed to show they had understood the significance of "мало знала язык" to secure the mark. A pleasing number of candidates also demonstrated they understood the meaning of "образ жизни". 9b (iii) relied on the specific knowledge of two low frequency items of vocabulary. Answers were accepted which conveyed the meaning of "independent" and "confident" as well as direct translations. The final item on the paper was an inference question, which many candidates coped with really well. It required a general understanding of the passage as a whole, and an understanding of the implications of the concluding sentence, "Я не сидела дома, как родители хотели, но стала успешным хирургом, как я захотела". There were some excellent interpretations, such as "She did things her way, not her parents'" "She achieved what she wanted through her own efforts", "She achieved her goal, in spite of her parents".

For this paper, candidates need to:

- carefully read the questions
- be able to understand the questions in Russian and look for linguistic clues
- recognise familiar language in unfamiliar contexts
- listen to the whole rather than focus in on individual items of vocabulary
- recognise the use of negation
- recognise the use of tenses and time indicators
- pay attention to detail, give full rather than partial answers
- have a sound knowledge of vocabulary
- express themselves clearly and unambiguously when writing in English and relate their answers to what is heard in the extract
- apply logic
- read over and correct their answers.