

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in Classical Arabic (4CA0) Paper 1

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4CA0/01 IGCSE Classical Arabic – Examiner’s report – June 2014

The following points were noted by examiners:

Question 1

The top candidates were able to show understanding of the Arabic text by skilful selection of English vocabulary. They also had an awareness of English sentence structure, and an ability to manipulate it correctly to deliver the meanings in the Arabic text into clear, comprehensible English prose. They also had a reasonable mastery of the use of punctuation in English to delineate the beginnings and endings of sentences.

The overwhelming majority of students were not able to achieve the top marks because their attempts to write English were constrained by the Arabic text. Their English was not clear because they brought over Arabic sentence structures into their writing. Their writing did not show the understanding that an English sentence, contrary to the Arabic, does not fluently contain more than one or two main clauses. They also displayed an almost total avoidance of the regular use in English of full-stops and capital letters to help readers process and assimilate the information in the text. An inability to differentiate between verb tenses was also a problem: normal sequence of tenses in Arabic is very often incorrect in English. Again, only the most competent candidates showed awareness of this and were able to change tense appropriately in their English translation.

It would be beneficial to ensure candidates are fully aware of English language skills to avoid cases of English translated word for word from the Arabic. Thus, for example, where the English reader needs a full-stop/capital letter to assist assimilation of text, he finds instead the typical Arabic use of ‘and’ or ‘so’. The importance of teaching candidates how to render Arabic into clear English will assist the vast preponderance of the students to obtain higher marks.

Where students come across an Arabic word whose meaning they do not know in English, they should try to find a suitable paraphrase, which will also find credit with the examiners. Gaps left in sentences make the meaning obscure and results in the loss of marks.

A significant number of candidates lost marks through not showing that they understood completely who was talking or who was being spoken to at any given moment in the passage.

Question 2

The above comments on Q.1 apply also to Q.2. The style of the modern text is different from that of the older classical text, but the use of punctuation in modern Arabic is not the same as that needed for modern English. Candidates should be appreciate how to translate an Arabic text into authentic English prose. Many candidates place English words into the framework of Arabic sentence structure and Arabic punctuation.

Question 3

There is a new format to this question this year and candidates seem to have found this new format more accessible. They achieved better marks than they achieved under the old format.

However, a small number of candidates still put the vowel marks on all the letters of the sentence which gives the impression that they did not read the question well.

Quite a few candidates missed the shadda. Few placed more than one diacritic above or under the letters.

Question 4

The most competent candidates displayed a mature and pleasing style in their use of Arabic. They made few errors in their understanding of English text, and were able to choose suitably from their own wide Arabic vocabulary.

Less able candidates made varying amounts of spelling, grammar and vocabulary errors in their writing, while the weakest tended to interpret parts of the English text incorrectly and show a limited grasp of sound Arabic rhetorical devices and vocabulary.

There was a number of spelling mistakes and some candidates struggled to translate full sentences such as 'until a light gleamed through the little cracks in the wall' – rather, they tended to translate just part of the sentence rather than the sentence as a whole. This has evidently compromised their marks. A good number of candidates did not apply the agreement of dual verbs and nouns when translating sentence with such structure.

Question 5

The question is designed to be a proper test of candidates' ability to write Arabic accurately.

The most able candidates managed to translate correctly, vocalising the letter at the end of each word and writing a soundly structured sentences. These are some of the most common errors:

- 5 (A): The word 'picked' was translated as 'choose/ carry/ hold/ take or lifted'. Few candidates were able to pluralize the word 'girls' in Arabic. Some candidates translated the 'heavy parcels' as 'equipment/ pieces/ pots or bags'.
- 5 (B): Few candidates translated the operation as 'investigation/search', others translated the 'lost coins' as 'lost currency, penny, pieces or piaster'.
- 5 (C): Some candidate found it difficult to translate the word 'women' in Arabic and the word 'straight' was translated to 'immediately'.
- 5 (D): Many candidates had some difficulty in using the correct translation for 'taxi- drivers'. Some translated 'suburbs' as 'areas', few translated 'northern' as 'southern' and some translated the word 'city' as 'country'.
- 5(E): Some candidates translated the 'air-hostess' as 'air host/employee/pilot', or even used the plural form. Many candidates appropriately used the speech marks.
- 5(F): Most of the candidate managed to translate this sentence correctly and used the speech mark. There was some confusion between "إلا & إلى", .
- 5 (G): Many candidates managed to get the meaning of this sentence, some had problem with writing the opposite gender of the number.

- 5 (H): Some candidates managed to get the correct meaning, but a few translated arm as hand.

Advice and guidance for preparing students

- Students should develop their accuracy in written English, with correct and orderly sentence demarcation using full-stop and capital letter.
- They must also improve performance in English by confident use of correct sequence of tenses.
- Candidates are advised to infer from the context.
- Care should be taken to avoid errors of spelling and grammar from their written Arabic, and candidates are advised to strengthen their knowledge and use of grammar.
- Candidates are advised to revise and check their writing in Arabic to avoid errors.

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