



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2010 Greek oral examination was divided into two parts: a seven-minute Conversation, and an eight-minute Discussion which comprises of a one-minute introduction and a seven-minute discussion of the Detailed Study. The assessment for both parts of the oral examination is divided into three sections: communication, content and language. The descriptors for the criteria are published on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

Although the Conversation and the Discussion criteria are similar, they assess different skills. It is important that all teachers and students are familiar with the criteria and reflect on them as part of their examination preparation. In the Conversation section, students need to speak and interact with assessors in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner about aspects of their personal world such as home life, family, friends, school, interests and aspirations. In the Discussion students need to present information and exchange ideas, opinions and information on a sub-topic chosen for the Detailed Study. This requires an objective approach so that the language used is less predictable. Students should focus on a topic that they are truly interested in so they will be more likely to express ideas and opinions and defend them effectively. Sometimes a topic to which students can relate at a personal level may enable them to be more familiar with the content and vocabulary needed; students will then be more skilled to support and elaborate on information, ideas and opinions.

Most students were well prepared for the Discussion; however, many were less well prepared to advance the exchange appropriately and effectively. These students were not able to elaborate on ideas and opinions or give reasons and examples to support their comments.

A number of students supported their Discussion appropriately with objects such as photographs, diagrams and maps, elaborating on them and stating why they considered them important. These objects were often useful prompts, especially for weaker students. It must be stressed, however, that the support material must be free of all but minimal writing such as headings. Material with more than minimal writing was removed either prior to students entering the examination room or in the examination room.

Students cannot simply rely on rote-learned information for the oral examination and must be able to use language spontaneously to handle unrehearsed situations. It is important that students practise responding to questions that are asked in different ways and practise answering unrehearsed questions for both sections of the examination. Students who speak Greek fluently still need to prepare adequately for both parts of the examination.

Simulated oral examinations in class, with two assessors where possible, can assist students to become comfortable with the experience and not feel nervous. Students should be given written instructions and explanations about the oral examination in Greek so that they become familiar with the terminology and vocabulary required. The setting of the examination is formal and students need to use appropriate language and avoid the use of colloquial terms. Students should be advised to use the correct formal register. When addressing one or both assessors, students should use the second person plural; for example, *θα σας μιλήσω*.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Communication

Most students were well prepared and were able to hold a conversation for seven minutes. They maintained and advanced the exchange appropriately and expanded effectively on aspects of their personal world, successfully discussing more than one topic and developing more than one aspect of the topic with some breadth and depth. They were able to go beyond simple responses and build on the assessors' comments by expressing opinions. They needed minimal support and had good repair strategies.

It is important that students listen carefully to the questions to ensure that they address what they are being asked and give relevant responses. Students should avoid responding in a rushed manner. They should give themselves time to focus on giving a clear response that displays correct pronunciation and intonation. If students do not understand the question they should ask for clarification and not respond with what appears to be a memorised answer. The



examination calls for a spontaneous and free-flowing conversation. Students should practise reflecting on their own experiences and developing good repair strategies. They need to be able to self-correct and avoid lengthy pauses.

Most students were able to express their ideas clearly, paying particular attention to pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. A very small number of students did not use the correct pronunciation and intonation.

Content

Most students were well prepared and able to speak effectively and fluently about areas such as home life, family and friends, school, interests and future aspirations. They were able to add breadth and depth to the conversation and support and elaborate on their statements with an excellent range of information, opinions and ideas.

It is vital for students to be well prepared to elaborate on their responses by giving reasons and examples, and that they do not resort to anglicisms and rote-learned material. For example, when discussing the sport they play, they should be able to further the conversation by explaining why they like it and how the sport helps them to relax/get fit/make friends, etc.

Students should come well prepared with a good knowledge of the vocabulary they will need, as this part of the examination is on familiar topics relating to their personal world. This remains a problematic area for some students. For example, some students did not know the Greek words for school subjects or the career path they aspire to. Other students had not considered what they may wish to do in the future and could not reply appropriately. The use of *σπουδάζω* instead of *μελετάω* and *δάσκαλος* instead of *καθηγητής* remain common errors, even though they are words that students are likely to use in this part of the examination.

Some students had rote-learned a few sentences on each area but were not able to expand on their responses or present a good range of information and ideas.

Language

Simple grammatical structures were used well by all students; however, student performance on this criterion continues to be the weakest. Students need to take every opportunity to practise speaking Greek outside school, listen to Greek radio stations, watch Greek TV programs and listen to well-modelled Greek from adult native speakers where possible.

While the more able students displayed an excellent range of vocabulary and grammatical structures that were used accurately, the weaker students had a more limited vocabulary. Basic grammatical and syntactical errors included:

- saying *πρέπεις*, *πρέπω*, *πρέπουν*, *χρειάζει*, *προσπαθάνω*, *αρέσω* instead of the correct words *πρέπει*, *χρειάζομαι*, *προσπαθώ* and *με αρέσει*
- incorrect stress (for example, *ο πατεράς έχει*, *δικήγορος*)
- incorrect use of articles and gender (*το γλώσσα*, *οι έλληνας*, *οι άνθρωπος*, *ο άγχος*)
- incorrect form of the plural form of nouns and adjectives (*οι έλληνοι*, *οι άνθρωπος*, *πολλά έλληνες*)
- overuse of the nominative case *είδα η γυναίκα* instead of the correct case *είδα τη γυναίκα*
- incorrect use of the genitive case *του φίλος μου*, *της γυναικών*
- lack of agreement between nouns and adjectives (*η μητέρα μου έχει έξι φίλοι*, *το πλοίο ήταν ο Πατρίς*)
- incorrect use of the active and passive voices and verb endings in general; for example, *ονειρεύω* instead of *ονειρεύομαι*
- incorrect use of the past tense; for example, *αγάπησα* instead of *αγαπούσα*, *διάβαζα* instead of *διάβασα*
- using English words (*θα πάω στο city*, *να πάω holidays*)
- using anglicisms such as *το κάρο*, *το γιάρτι*, *το φάρμα*, *τηλεβίζιο*
- translating expressions from English; for example, *από του μπαμπά μου της δουλειάς*.

Section 2 – Discussion

Communication

Teachers and students should refer to the *VCE Greek Study Design* for more information regarding the oral examination. Teachers and students should note that ‘Following the Conversation the student will indicate to the assessor(s) the sub-topic chosen for Detailed Study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduce the main focus of their sub-topic, alerting assessors to any objects brought to the support the discussion’ (*VCE Greek Study Design*, page 31).

Most students used the one-minute introduction appropriately. They stated the focus of the sub-topic, highlighting the issues and perspectives they would be exploring and steering assessors towards areas they could discuss with



confidence and strength. However, some students simply named their topic and then began retelling the content of the texts studied. These students went beyond the one-minute time limit and assessors had to interrupt them to begin the discussion. These students had often not formulated their own opinions on the sub-topic.

In the seven-minute discussion that followed the introduction, students demonstrated a sound knowledge and appreciation of their chosen topic. Most students spoke confidently and were skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, supporting them with appropriate evidence from the specific texts studied. They used a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures and had a high degree of interaction with the assessors. They were able to advance the discussion with interesting comments and at times were able to lead the discussion.

Students are more likely to be inspired to take an active and appropriate part in the Discussion if they understand the resources and have empathy for the material studied. Texts must always be appropriate for the student and the topic studied. Interviews, articles, short stories, films, poems, songs and pictures can all be used successfully. Students should have in-depth knowledge of the texts they have studied and have a variety of things to say about them; they should not just retell the content/plot. Students must be able to reflect on the topics, to express their own opinions and be prepared to discuss and justify information.

At times the topics did not suit the linguistic ability of the students. These students did not have the range and depth of vocabulary to carry the discussion forward or to deal with the variety of questions asked. They were also unable to demonstrate good repair strategies when in difficulty. When students are not sure of the appropriate answer they should respond with 'I am not sure but I think that ...' Some students were unable to cite resources, while others offered the names of many texts but were unable to discuss them in any depth. Practising a wide range of impromptu answers to a variety of likely and less likely questions helps students to improve their performance and avoid rote-learning material.

Students who brought photos and images as support material for the Discussion were able to discuss and elaborate on them in some depth and not merely describe the images.

The criterion 'Clarity of expression' was addressed well by most students, who had good pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Content

Many students had obviously enjoyed their Detailed Study and spoke enthusiastically about their sub-topic. Only a small number of students showed little active interest in their chosen sub-topic and relied on rote-learned passages that retold the plot of the texts studied. These students needed a great deal of support from assessors. Sub-topics should reflect the interests and abilities of the class, as well as those of individual students, in order to enable students to display an excellent knowledge of the content and to elaborate on ideas and opinions with reasons, examples and evidence. The sub-topics chosen must cater effectively for all students' linguistic ability. Some sub-topics are ideal for competent students but can be too difficult and challenging for weaker students. Sub-topics that were beyond the linguistic capability of students were not dealt with successfully, as students found it difficult to recall specific information and then process it in their response.

Students are expected to have dedicated 15 hours of class time to the Detailed Study and to have been exposed to a variety of resources on which they can draw in their discussion. Good sub-topics 'should enable the student to explore and compare aspects of the language and culture of the Greek-speaking community through a range of oral and written texts in Greek related to the selected sub-topic' (*VCE Greek Study Design*, page 24).

Some popular topics from previous years were presented from a different angle this year, and this enabled students to be more engaged in the discussion and to improve their performance. For example, the topic of *Μεσογειακή διατροφή* was explored from the angle of how Greeks in Australia need to return to a more traditional Greek diet in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle; this allowed for a more in-depth discussion and development of opinions. In addition, some topics such as *Καλές τέχνες- η προσφορά του Μίκη Θεοδωράκη στη κοινότητα της διασποράς* included interesting resources and allowed the exchange of an excellent range of ideas and opinions.

When preparing for the oral examination, students may find it useful to make notes, summarising the sources and writing down how their chosen texts relate to one another rather than seeing them in isolation. They should try to analyse and think for themselves, and be prepared to give some original opinions. At times students referred to resources without appreciating the ideas they contained and were not able to develop their own opinions. For example, when referring to a film, they should not simply give a summary of the plot, but should be able to examine and discuss the themes raised, and present and defend their own opinion.



Teachers and students should be aware that it is not the number of texts studied that is important, but the students' understanding and appreciation of the resources and their ability to discuss the texts' themes and ideas. Merely listing a large number of texts does not necessarily enable students to support and elaborate on information, ideas and opinions with reasons, examples, evidence and/or new ideas.

The use of very factual texts, or texts that are too short or too simple, may not allow students to develop and express ideas and opinions and may cause the discussion to lack breadth and depth. Resources should correspond specifically to the chosen sub-topic and enable all students to appreciate their relation to the sub-topic so that they draw upon these in the Discussion. Some students made only vague or no reference to the sub-topic and the resources.

Language

Students should be able to use an excellent range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and expressions accurately and appropriately. They should have spent at least 15 hours in class on the Detailed Study and should have mastered the vocabulary associated with their chosen sub-topic.

Most students had good knowledge of the vocabulary required and the correct grammatical structures, and presented an excellent range of information, ideas and opinions. This was demonstrated by vocabulary such as *η συνταγή της μακροζωίας είναι, χαλαρώνω με αυτό τον τρόπο, κολλητούς φίλους*, and complex sentence structures such as *η διατήρηση της ελληνοαυστραλιανής ταυτότητας είναι αναγκαία για την προώθηση όχι μόνο της ελληνικής κουλτούρας αλλά και της ελληνικής γλώσσας*.

However, as in the Conversation section, student performance on this criterion was weakest, with the following similar types of grammatical and syntactical errors:

- students should not make mistakes like *δεν το αρέσω αυτό το έργο* when they know that they are likely to refer to the film they have seen as one of their resources
- students should know the specific vocabulary needed for their sub-topic
- students should know the genders of the key words, learn to use a variety of adjectives correctly and not make mistakes such as *διαφορετικά ρόλοι, στη παλιά χρόνια, τα μουσική*
- students should master syntactical structures appropriate to the discussion of their sub-topic.