Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Arabic (5AR01/01)
Paper 1: Listening and Understanding
in Arabic

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GCSE Arabic
Unit 1 Listening and Understanding
Examiners' Report

General Comments

The topics which this year's Listening paper comprises are highly relevant and suitable to the purposes and levels of this test. The themes provide a wide spectrum of interests which young people in the Arab world and learners of Arabic all over the world try to master as a first step to comprehending and speaking/writing the Arabic language. The themes and the questions based on them in the paper provide a range of oral activities that appeal to native Arab speakers, as well as to foreign learners from around the world.

In answering the question paper, candidates of all levels did as generally expected with some successes and discrepancies highlighted. These will be mentioned below. Here are some comments on each of the questions:

Question 1 Leisure activities

This question was accessible to a vast majority of candidates, with no noticeable exceptions or anomalies. An average percentage of 97% did this question correctly.

Question 2 At the zoo

Although this is a grade E level question many candidates (about 25% of the cohort) found the question challenging, with certain items more challenging than others (e.g. 2d and 2e). This is probably due to the high level language used in adverts of this kind and the fact that the candidates had to write their answers in the English language.

2a
Many candidates used this answer or 'Summer term' correctly (78.81%). Some wrote the answer using Arabic script as which was unacceptable as all answers must be in English.

2b
A lot of candidates got the answers right for this question. Some candidates gave wrong guesses.

2c
Unexpectedly, 89% of the total cohort answered this item correctly. Many candidates gave the answer 'older people', which was not taken as correct, as this answer does not specify roughly the age which people start paying as adults.

2d
Many candidates gave the answer as £5.00, which was the amount paid for the ages between 5 and 12. Only 64% got it right. That showed the item was more challenging than the first 3 items of the question.

2e

This was also challenging as only 62% got it right. Many candidates used motorbikes. This answer was taken as wrong because in the Arabic language the term for motorbikes is دراجات بخارية which is different from that for bicycles which is دراجات هوائية.

Question 3 Jobs in Qatar

A great number of candidates found this question accessible, even with some candidates who are below level D. The majority scored 4 out of 5 answers. The most challenging of item was 3i (The jobs are for _next_ year) (80.53% getting it right), and the most accessible of all items was 3iv (preference will be given to speakers of Arabic and _English_) (98.04% getting it right). This is expected considering the nature of items concerned and the type of language used for both.

3ii

Many candidates confused 'computer programmes' with 'Arabic websites' and 'word processing', since these options are all to do with ICT training. On the whole this question was fit for purpose and quite accessible to more than 80% of the candidates, which is within the normal expectations.

Question 4 At the Lebanese restaurant

This question was liked by the majority of candidates. More than 90% of all candidates did this question correctly, although it was a grade C level question. This is probably due to the format of the question and the pausing time given in the recording after each question, which allows for the candidate to think about and pick the correct answer. More than 90% of candidates overall got this question right.

The most challenging of all five items in this question is 4v, which more than 30% could not get right. This is probably due to the fact that most of the options were terms to do with ordering 'food' and for this particular item the correct answer was (C/Bottle of water) which is strictly not a 'food' type, but a 'drink'.

Question 5 Going to the cinema

Again, a great number of candidates (85%+) found this question accessible, most probably because of the format of the question and the pausing time in the recording allowing enough time for candidates to think of the correct answer. Another possible explanation for the popularity of the question is its theme of the 'Going to the Cinema', which seems to be a popular theme for young people in general.

Question 6 Visitor information

Again, like Q5, a great number of candidates (85%+) found this question accessible, because of the format of the question and the pausing time in the recording allowing enough time for candidates to think of the correct

answer. The only part of the question that proved more challenging than the rest was Q6v. It seems that the distinction between 'opposite the great mosque', 'behind the great mosque' and 'next to the great mosque' was rather difficult to make. Only 81% of candidates managed to guess this distinction correctly.

Generally, however, Q6 was fit for purpose as a grade F level question, with the majority of candidates getting the answers right, well within expectations.

Question 7 Weather forecast

Unlike Q3 above, which was another grade D level question, a great number of candidates found this question rather challenging. A general average of 70% got 3 and 4 marks out of 5 correctly. It seems that terms to do with weather forecast in Arabic (e.g. مغيم دافئ معتدل رطب بارد) are rather challenging when translated into English. The most challenging of all five answers was part 7iii (رطب humid), a term which seems to be rather challenging for speakers of English as a Foreign language). Only 61% of the candidates managed to find the correct answer with this part.

Question 8 Reading for pleasure

This was a typical A* question. Only 45.37% of candidates gave 4 or 5 correct answers out of 5, which is well expected and showed the question to be well differentiated, even for candidates at a low level of linguistic ability. It seems that the theme of reading when combined with modern technology (iPads, iPhones, Kindles, etc.) are very popular themes for young Arabic speakers.

Question 9 Midnight lights

Many of the items within this question were accessible to candidates across levels (e.g. 9a, b, d, e and f). However, there were some questions, particularly Q9c and 9g) that proved to be rather challenging to candidates. Parts 9c, 9e and 9g generated a large number of possible correct answers that could not be considered wrong just because they differed from the original Mark Scheme.
Over 50% of candidates found 7 correct answers out of 10, which showed the question to be well-differentiated and accessible to candidates across levels. The two exceptions were 9c and 9g (see the analysis below). The candidates, who could not guess the answers correctly, in my view, are those who find writing answers in English demanding.
Here are some comments on the performance of candidates for each question.

9a
A total of 50% of candidates found the correct answer for this question.

9b
Many candidates gave different wordings as an answer which was accepted if the answer was close to that in the Marking Scheme.

9c

A lot of possible answers were generated as answers to this question which could only be taken as correct answers as they gave a close meaning to the one the ones in the marking scheme.

9d

The item was accessible to more than 50% of candidates, which was within general expectations.

9e

This question was answered correctly by nearly 61.04% of candidates. Some possible answers were generated and accepted (e.g. hospital, fire brigades, emergency services).

9f

This was one of the most popular of items within Q.9. 75.6% managed to get the answer right. It was quite accessible even to lower level candidates, which was on the whole pleasing to notice. This showed that the items within this question were well differentiated.

9g

56% found the answer correctly with this question which showed the question quite accessible and well differentiated.

Despite the fact that this question paper looks at first sight rather difficult or inaccessible, the results show that a great percentage of candidates sitting this paper managed to do well when answering it. It seems that the paper contained mixed and balanced elements that challenged the most able candidates; meanwhile it provided a fairly easy way for the lower ability candidates to achieve success, albeit not at top bands.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx