

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

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

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Publications Code 5AR01_01_1606_ER

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GCSE Arabic
Paper 1 Listening and Understanding
Examiner 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 Arabic speakers, as well as to foreign learners from around the world.

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

Question 1: At the cafeteria

This question was accessible to a vast majority of candidates, with no noticeable exceptions or anomalies. Nearly 95% of all candidates completed this question correctly.

Question 2: Sports day

Again, a great number of candidates found this question accessible, first, 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 'Sport' which is a popular theme across the specification.

Question 3: Back to school

A large number of candidates found this question accessible. More than 90% of candidates overall got this question right. School subjects are a very interesting theme in the specification and students interacted with it well.

Question 4: Leisure activities

Again, a great number of candidates found this question accessible, first, 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 'leisure activities', which is popular in the specification.

The only anomaly was question 4(ii) where less than 0.5% of candidates answered the question correctly. This was possibly due to a failure to understand the word 'tired' which was the correct answer. This answer was meant to be understood from the Arabic phrase: وهذا متعب . The variation of the word for 'tired' provided in the specification was 'تعبان' , and students were unable to recognise

this in the exam. Therefore this difficulty for candidates was due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Question 5: Summer holidays

A great number of candidates (nearly 90%) found this question accessible, and it was pleasantly surprising to see more candidates than expected performing highly in this question. A possible reason for this is due to 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 'holidays', which is a popular theme across all four units of the specification.

Question 6: Means of transport

This question was accessible to a vast majority of candidates, with no noticeable exceptions or anomalies. An average percentage of 96% of candidates did this question correctly. The question's topic of 'travel and transport' was popular, and students were able to recognise the vocabulary for members of the family and others, such as 'mother', 'friend', 'teacher' etc.

Question 7: Healthy eating

A considerable number of candidates found question 7 challenging, even some high ability candidates. This is possibly due to the high level of language used in the communication between the speakers and difficulties with the students interpreting the recording.

Phrases such as 'كُونِي مِثْلِي' meaning 'be like me' for question 7(c) may have been difficult for some candidates to understand enough to answer the question correctly. However, simpler phrases such as the negative phrase 'لا يَا نَوَالْ' (no, Nawal) spoken by the dad for question 7(b) can allow students to either answer correctly or take educated guesses by inferring the answer.

Students should read the questions carefully and listen to the recording attentively. However it is pleasing to note that question 7(a) was very well answered with almost 90% of candidates scoring 1/1 marks for this part.

Question 8: Shopping for a wedding

This is an A* grade question where 49% of candidates scored 5 out of 5 possible marks. It seems that the theme of shopping for a wedding added to the popularity of the question, as well as the clear question format which made it accessible to many candidates.

Some students made the mistake of choosing some of the distractor sentences in this question (point e for example), and a lack of firm knowledge of some vocabulary such as colours ('الاسود', 'الاحمر', 'الازرق' etc) made it difficult for them to choose the correct statement.

Question 9: Planning a school exchange

Question type: Answering questions in English.

This is quite an interesting question to comment on. Many of the parts within this question were accessible to candidates across all the levels (e.g. 9a, b and e). Lower performance was recorded in parts d and f. The candidates who could not answer correctly may include those who find writing answers in English demanding.

Here are some comments on the performance of candidates for each part of question 9.

9a Answer: Two weeks

More than 87% of the candidates answered correctly.

9b Answer: Germany

This question was well accessible as nearly 70% of candidates answered correctly.

9c Answer: Part 1) the host family details, part 2) Proof of responsibility

This seemed like a well differentiated question as a nearly equal percentage of candidates achieved either 0 marks or 2 marks out of 2. The candidates were asked about what information that Mariam Sa'eed sent to John White and why it was sent. A reason for students to not achieve highly in this question is that they were able to give details but weren't able to give the explanation of why.

9d Answer: Excellent idea

It seems that some candidates found the word فكرة ممتازة difficult to understand in Arabic.

9e Answer: Cairo/Cairo museum(s), Alqahera, pyramids, Ahramat etc.

This question was answered correctly by nearly 60% of candidates. Some answers were not accepted such as those who gave the answer in Arabic rather than the English translation required.

9f Answer: Send an email

Candidates found this question challenging because of the high level phrase used: رسالة إلكترونية (e-mail). A grade A/A* candidate however, should be able to answer correctly.

9g Answer: Agree a date for the trip/how or where they are going to meet

50% of candidates answered this question correctly and it was quite accessible. This question required the candidates to provide two details. Most of the candidates managed to provide only one correct detail. There may have been a

lack of understanding of what was meant by "كيفية اللقاء", literally translated "the way of the meeting". This was a challenging part of the exam paper and only the candidates who had great command of the Arabic language were able to score full marks in this question.

In conclusion, performance in this year's paper was generally good and similar to previous years. The results show that a great percentage of candidates sitting this paper managed to do well. It seems that the paper contained questions which had mixed and balanced elements that differentiated well, challenging the most able candidates and providing a way for the lower ability candidates to achieve success.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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