

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Arabic (5AR03/01)
Paper 3: Reading and Understanding in
Arabic

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GCSE Arabic (2016)
Unit 3 Reading
Examiner Report

Question 1: At the hotel

This is one of the easiest questions in the exam paper and the question was accessible to the greatest majority of candidates. Around 90% of candidates achieved at least five marks out of five in this question.

Question 2: In the city of Hebron

Candidates across abilities performed well in this question. Many candidates achieved full marks and performed quite well in certain parts. However, some candidates were not as successful as expected in some sections of this question.

Around 18% of candidates were not successful in answering 2i and 2iii as they were not familiar with the words for pharmacy and police station. Teachers need to ensure that candidates are aware of vocabulary in the Edexcel Pearson Key Vocabulary Book.

Question 3: Zyad

This question was targeted at grade D candidates. Candidates did particularly well in questions 3a and 3c but they struggled with other parts of this question.

Nearly half the candidates failed to answer questions 3b and 3d because they were not familiar with the word for Masters in Arabic, and the word for Qatar in Arabic. Candidates also found some difficulties in attempting 3e as they didn't know skiing in Arabic; some candidates confused skiing with skating.

There is a need for consistency in the instruction of Arabic and in the use of the Core Vocabulary Book. Teachers need to ensure that their candidates are taught all topics highlighted in the Pearson Edexcel specification.

Teachers should also ensure that their learners are familiar with Arabic countries and some of the main cities in these countries.

Question 4: Keeping healthy

This question was intended for C candidates and it worked well for most of them. Many candidates performed as expected and achieved marks reflecting their ability.

However, many C candidates as well as other candidates found issues with 4iii because they were not familiar with the sport activity running.

All sport activities in the Core Vocabulary Book are relevant and should be covered and taught in lessons to ensure candidates achieve marks and grades that truly reflect their ability.

Question 5: A trip to town

Question five was targeted at B grade candidates, and the question differentiated well between candidates of different abilities. The question covered key topics that are normally taught quite well in schools, such as: clothes, time, friends and family as well as transport.

However, many candidates were unsuccessful in achieving a mark in 5iii as they were not familiar with the words for early and late. Time sequences often come up in different questions and teachers need to ensure that their candidates are familiar with them.

Question 6: Hobbies

It is no surprise to us that this question was very popular and proved a success with candidates across abilities; most of them performing very well in all parts of the question.

Our overall data showed that over 90% of candidates achieved five out of five in this question. This can perhaps be explained by the good quality of teaching and learning in schools and also the popularity of the topic of hobbies.

In order for candidates to achieve similar successes in other questions teachers need to cover all other themes and topics relating to GCSE Arabic. This will better prepare candidates for the exam paper and help ensure their success.

Question 7: Hassan's friends

This question was aimed at D candidates and as expected they performed well in all parts of this question. Other candidates also found this question quite accessible and the overall achievement in all parts of this question was quite high, ranging between 80% and 90%.

Question 8: A letter of complaint to a hotel

This question was targeted at grade A* candidates and it differentiated well between higher and lower abilities. Most candidates met our expectations in this question.

The question incorporates many popular and key themes and topics from the Arabic GCSE specification i.e. days of the week, food and drink, positive and negative sentences, adjectives, quantities, adverbs and verbs in different tenses.

Question 9: Naguib Mahfouz

Question 9 was aimed at A candidates, however some A and A* candidates did not perform as well as expected.

Our data indicates that only 33% of A/A* candidates managed to answer question 9d; a question that relates to qualifications. Also, only 18% A/A* candidates were successful in answering question 9g as they were not familiar with the word 'civil servant'.

It is also a big concern to us that only 5% of A/A* candidates managed to answer question 9e because they could not interpret 'Mid thirties'.

Candidates failed in these questions not because of the difficulty and complexity of the questions, or because of the text and the layout of the information in the text. We believe it is due to gaps in the candidates' learning and gaps in instruction, and we hope teachers read our report and address these issues.

It is also worth noting that many A/A* candidates find question 9 fairly challenging because of a lack of fluency in English, and this impedes their achievement in this question. It is important that candidates practice past exam papers to familiarise themselves with the layout and expectations of the paper in order to better prepare them for the final exam.

Candidates require basic English language skills to attempt question 9 successfully as well as other questions where the use of English in answering questions is needed. It should be noted that any answers in Arabic for question 9 or other questions, (apart from question 8), were not valid and would not have been awarded any marks.

Summary

This paper differentiated well between candidates of different abilities. Our expectations and predications of student's performance, in all questions at all levels, have been met and these assertions are supported by our data. The paper was fair to all candidates across all abilities.

Centres should ensure that all candidates are familiar with the content of the minimum core vocabulary. The core vocabulary book can be downloaded from the Edexcel website and should play an important part in the teaching of Arabic in the classroom. Candidates should also be fairly familiar with key aspects of Arab culture, as we believe it strengthens and consolidates the teaching and learning of Arabic.

Candidates, especially native speakers, should be given further opportunities to practice answering higher level questions in English. They need to have the necessary English language skills to attempt questions such as question 9. It is also important that candidates across abilities have an opportunity to practice past papers to ensure they are familiar with the requirements and the layout of the paper.

Some topics are more popular than others and are consequently taught better than other topics with better candidate results. Teachers need to make sure that all topics are covered. This will guarantee fairness to candidates in the exam and help ensure better consistency and reliability of results. In turn, this will help candidates to achieve grades that truly reflect their ability.

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>