



# Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
In Arabic (5AR02\_01) Paper 2  
Speaking in Arabic

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**A Report on Marking Arabic GCSE/Speaking  
5AR02 Paper 01  
June 2018**

This year, like last year (June 2017) our team of examiners, Team Leaders and I are pleased to observe that many of the national and international centres have improved significantly in the way they conduct the Speaking test, especially regarding choice of tasks, questioning, timing and accuracy issues. Many of the centres have followed the correct procedures, rules and guidelines when administering the test. Centre examiners and exam conductors are mostly using appropriate questioning methods and techniques, eliciting from the candidates the right amount of talk which is necessary for the final assessment.

Unfortunately, however, there are still many centres that are not following the basic examination guidelines and regulations, thus putting the examiners and moderators in a very difficult position. Exam conductors and teachers should realise that inaccurate application of examination rules and regulations have an adverse effect on the outcome of the test and may cause loss of marks. This in effect means that the candidates are penalised through no fault of their own.

Erroneous application of exam rules varied considerably this year, but these could generally be classified under two main headings: Content of information provided in the two tasks and the methods and techniques followed by the teacher to conduct the exam.

**1. Content of talk:**

- A considerable number of centres still teach their candidates a whole set of exactly the same questions and answers which they repeat with every candidate, without variation or differentiation. Examination rules clearly indicate that candidates should not be given a set of questions in advance and they should certainly not rehearse any answers which would then be recorded in the examination. Such centres are obviously violating the examination rules and guidelines.
- A considerable number of centres have used a strict order of questions (mostly adopted from the specifications booklet) without any change or variation, which though acceptable, may still fail to show the candidate's real linguistic competence.
- Some teachers are happy to accept monologues or presentations throughout the tests, without any attempt at interrupting to offer follow-up questions that would show the candidate's ability to speak Arabic. Considerable marks are lost when the whole of the candidate's performance is solely monologues.
- Oral presentations, (OP), if chosen as a technique, should be for one task not for the two tasks. They should not be more than 2 minutes in length and should be followed by 2 to 3 minutes of discussion and questions relating to the theme of the presentation. The follow-up discussion is compulsory for the completion of the task and should certainly not repeat questions that the candidates have already covered in the oral presentation.

- Another issue that has been fairly common this year is the types of questions asked by some teachers. Some native speakers who were fluent Arabic speakers find some questions very hard to answer. This is because some of these questions are information seeking rather than testing the candidates' knowledge and ability to speak and interact in Arabic. It is important that teachers avoid asking questions that are knowledge-based; they should focus their questions on ways that would help to elicit enough language that would show the candidate's understanding and communication in Arabic.
- We have also noticed this year an increase in the number of depressing questions which have a detrimental effect on the quality of the test. Teachers should avoid asking questions related to war experiences and conditions which raise the level of emotional status during the exam time.
- There were many instances where teachers did only one task of less than 5 minutes with no boundary to mark end of one task and beginning of the second task. Such cases are taken as one task only and would thus be given half the total mark.
- Some teachers did not give enough time for the candidates to say what they wanted to say; they interrupt them with new questions before the candidates complete their points.
- Many teachers use their own dialects, rather than Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), thus causing considerable confusion for their candidates. Some paraphrased the questions in the dialects of the pupils, thus affecting the quality of spoken language produced by the candidates.
- Many teachers use English to clarify the questions for the candidates when the latter seem to misunderstand the questions asked.
- Many centres did not complete the Mark Record Sheets fully, leaving some important parts incomplete (e.g. the order of topics, centre details, name of the examiners and so on). Topics must be recorded clearly on the Mark Record Sheets. Teachers should not mark the test and record marks on the Mark Record Sheets.
- Many centres miss sending the Mark Record Sheets. This is a major problem and a clear violation of exam rules. Teacher examiners should realise that MRS provide examiners/markers with details of the task, signatures of the teachers and their candidates (proof of authenticity) and other important information, such as the centre and candidate number and details.

## **2. Techniques of Exam Conduct:**

- Many centres sent blank disks with no recording audible on them.
- Many centres did not wrap their envelopes securely, thus some CDs/tapes/covers were damaged during posting.

- Many teachers did not favour or use the microphone close to the examinees, thus getting their own voices clearer and louder than those of their pupils. In some cases the pupil voices were hardly audible.
- Some centres did not send the Attendance Registers or have added names to the registers that are not registered by Pearson and have not appeared in the allocations.
- Many centres are still using old and inefficient methods of recording that usually produce badly recorded tasks. To avoid these problems teachers are advised to adopt a more digital recording using Dictaphones, PCs or CD players. The majority of centres in the UK and abroad are doing that anyway.
- There were clear cases of exam conductors trying to give help to the candidates. Background noise in some of the recordings was quite audible and showed exam teachers trying somehow to utter certain words and phrases that the candidates repeated.
- Many candidates were heard saying something erroneous, but then change to say something else after being prompted by the teachers.
- Background noise in some of the recordings and nature of answers given indicated that the candidates were reading from scripts that had been pre-planned.

To ensure consistency, quality assurance and accuracy of the GCSE examinations, all teachers conducting the examination across centres, MUST follow a similar pattern of application of approach and methodology. The exam instructions on how to conduct the test are very clear and there is no reason why centres fail to get the test right. Tests that are not conducted properly may significantly affect the outcome of the test and the marks allocated.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations:**

- One major reason for the problems above is lack of training for teachers and centre examiners/conductors of tests. Teachers who conduct these tests should be fully trained and should be aware of the exam rules and conditions.
- Another important reason for many of the problems above is the employment of incapable examiners who are not fully trained native speakers of Arabic. Many teachers lacked basic knowledge of Arabic. Some centres had candidates which were far better linguistically than their teachers.
- Teachers should be advised to put the microphone closer to the candidate and as far away from the teachers as possible.

- Teachers should conduct the test in a quiet environment, avoiding all background noise and interruptions.
- Centres should make sure that the recordings match the number of candidates on the register. They should also double check that the recordings are for the right candidates.
- It is essential that Pearson should insist on having the Mark Record Sheets filled in and signed by both the teachers and candidates.
- It is essential that Pearson should write to centres that are not strictly adhering to the basic exam rules and regulations. Centres that repeat mismanaging the test should be sanctioned.
- ***I reiterate my previous recommendations that enough training should be offered by Pearson specialists for teachers who are responsible for conducting the tests. The present Speaking exam 5AR02 needs fully trained native Arabic teachers to conduct the test.***

### **Acknowledgements**

Despite the above mentioned-problems and concerns, it is important for us to acknowledge centres that do the test properly. There were a great number of centres that conducted the test and recordings brilliantly, adhering accurately to the correct order of tasks, timing and instructions. Such centres had highly trained professional teachers who should be complimented and congratulated in the final report.

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