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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Arabic (5AR04_01) Paper 4
Speaking in Arabic

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GCSE Arabic Reading 2018
Unit 4 Writing in Arabic
Examiner Report

This examination paper has been designed to accommodate a wide range of student profiles, and rewards work from grades G to A*. It consists of two tasks; short writing task and longer writing task. Candidates are asked to choose one question in each task out of a choice of four. They are required to write 30-70 words in task one (Section A), and a minimum of 120 words in task two (Section B). Both tasks require writing in Arabic where candidates have one hour to complete this paper. This paper carries a maximum of 50 marks.

Section A (Short writing task):

Candidates are required to produce a short writing task in Arabic (30-70 words) in response to a choice of four questions that relate to two prescribed themes:

1. Media, Travel and Culture
2. Sports, Leisure and Work

The task is assessed for Content and Communication (10 marks) and Knowledge and Application of Language (10 marks) only. The maximum mark for this task is 20.

Section B (Longer writing task):

Candidates are required to produce a longer writing task in Arabic (a minimum of 120 words) in response to a choice of four questions that relate to two prescribed themes:

1. Media, Travel and Culture
2. Sports, Leisure and Work

In this task, candidates are once again assessed for Content and Communication (15 marks), Knowledge and Application of Language (10 marks) and now for Accuracy (5 marks). The maximum mark for this task is 30. The questions in this examination paper were carefully selected to give candidates a wide choice of tasks through which they can express their knowledge of the Arabic language. In general, the performance of the candidates was of a high standard. Most of the questions proved accessible for a considerable number of candidates and there was no indication that English words or phrases in the question paper presented any difficulty for the majority of candidates.

Question 1a:

This question was a popular questions in section one. Candidates seem to like to write about going to theatre or movie. The question spoke about winning three tickets to a play and it asked candidates to write an email describing this play, the venue, the people they went with, the name of the play, description of the main character, their feedback and why. Overall there was a very good response from the majority of the candidates, they gave good description of the venue and the pay. But some confused the word "paly" to mean "game. So it was decided to include it as a correct answer in the mark scheme during standardisation.

High- level candidates had very good and detailed answers. They presented good description of their chosen character in the play. Furthermore, they used a range of compound and complex sentences and showed clear ability to narrate and express opinions.

The access to dictionaries in the exam helped many candidates to score well by finding the appropriate adjectives to describe and elaborate about the topic, and therefore, many manage to get above average mark. Those who attempted the question used a character like Harry porter. Candidates who did not manage to score well here are those had difficulties to form simple sentences, or had very bad and difficult to read handwriting. This is the question where examiners noticed too many words that were transliterated, and most of the time, were too difficult to read.

Question 1b:

This question asked candidates to write an essay about a "Concert" mentioning the date, time, place, the location, where to buy the tickets from, and why the concert is important. Most candidates produced excellent level of responses on this question with most of candidates mentioning all five bullet points. However, the bottom set of candidates found it difficult to write about the reason why this concert shouldn't be missed.

Question 1c:

This question asked students to talk about their work experience in a beach resort for three weeks in the summer. There were some interesting and clear responses from candidates to this question. A large number of candidates who answered this questions were very weak and struggled to express their feelings. However they managed to cover many points and gained some good marks. Others did not write about how useful or not this job is to young people. They only wrote one or two words without elaborating or extending their sentences. Generally this is one of the challenging questions because it was about work experience.

Question 1d:

This question proved to be very popular, It asked students to write an article describing different life styles in order to say healthy, then it asked them about their preference and why. Overall the question was answered very well by most candidates, they demonstrate good knowledge of how to stay healthy and what their favourite healthy style was and managed to explain why. This question gave students the opportunity to give very good answers even though Arabic is a second language. Examiners noticed that some answers for this question were at the level of native speakers. Many Students find topics about health, food and daily routine very interesting, and easier to talk about, and easy to score well on. However, there are few students who fail to get the full marks by just forgetting to include one or two points.

Question 2a:

In this question candidates are asked to write to the government to convince then to stop building a proposed new transport project.

This question was done perfectly with the student that chose this question. They were passionate about how to convince the government not to go ahead and build new airport and train station in their town.

Generally, this question gave the candidates more freedom of choice in terms of writing material. They expressed their opinions and points of view clearly; gave excellent explanations for the advantages and disadvantages of the project. Used variety of vocabulary and complex sentences.

The candidates who chose to answer this question had great ability to expand their sentences. Some of them wrote beyond expectations and were very articulate. However, the least able candidates managed to gain some fairly good marks. There was evidence of challenging themselves by trying to link the whole into a piece and using advanced and complex sentences. Although some marks were lost on language and accuracy, these candidates managed to gain good marks on content and communications.

Question 2b:

Although online booking is a subject that students are familiar with, they did not find this question easy to write about! Candidates were asked to write an article in Arabic expressing in details the advantages as well as the disadvantages of online booking, their own experience or the that of someone else's. Overall the majority did not address this question properly because they misunderstood the question and wrote about the advantages of internet technology instead. Therefore, many gave clear explanation of advantages and disadvantages of shopping online. Despite all the difficulties, examiners came across some excellent responses to this question and most of those were confident of their ability and competence in the target language, and hence, managed to score well. This is the least popular question among candidates in this section.

Question 2c:

Candidates were asked to write about a school 'Athlete of the Year' prize that they won. As it is a question of sports, many students were able to give full details of the experience, how they trained for the contest and whether they would encourage other students to enter. This question was very popular in this section.

The able candidates who answered it had no problems of expressing and extending their answers further. However, some candidates struggled to expand their plan and elaborate their ideas. The least able candidates had problem with sentence structure and grammar. Nevertheless, they managed to convey their expressions and covered the main points. These candidates lost some marks on knowledge of language and accuracy.

This question proved to be very popular in this section as it covers elements of sports in it, which is normally candidates' favourite topic.

Question 2d:

This is one of the most popular questions in section B. Candidates were asked to write an essay about how they organize a sport day, this task included planning and programming of this event, the type of sport, the help they received to organise this event, their feelings about organising this event and why. Most candidates who answered this question managed to write about the experience and the organisation of that day. This question gave all candidates the freedom to widely explore in their answers. Furthermore, it helped the least able candidates to gain some marks, even though, they struggled to use a range of key vocabulary. Other candidates gave a great account and gained high marks in communication and content but scored lower marks in language and accuracy because their language was basic with many errors.

The candidates who tried this question managed to get the higher marks as they were able to manipulate language and produce particles which were pleasure to read.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates and teachers are offered the following advice:

Some questions in this year's examination paper were more popular than others and were consequently answered better than other topics with better candidate results. Teachers need to make sure that all topics are covered. This will better prepare candidates and help to achieve grades that truly reflect their ability.

Candidates seemed to be more familiar with the layout of questions than previous years. However, they are reminded to read well into the questions before answering, so that they do not lose any of the information required by the question.

Candidates are advised that when the requirement of a question is presented in the plural form, then they are expected to produce more than one answer for that particular requirement to secure full marks. It is important that candidates across abilities have an opportunity to practice past papers to ensure that they are familiar with the layout of the paper. Introducing candidates to past papers questions is primarily the teachers' responsibility.

Candidates writing pre-learnt essays will end up with a lower score, as they are not always paying attention to the actual question requirements. The use of English words should be avoided.

Candidates are advised to avoid writing English words or literal translations.

The essays that scored the highest marks were characterised by a clear and defined structure, clarity of thought, well supported ideas, good presentation and use of an appropriate style.

