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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Arabic (1AA0) Paper 1F: Listening and
Understanding in Arabic

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Introduction

This was the first year of testing 1AA0 1F, based on the new 2017 GCSE specification. The Foundation tier exam is 30 minutes in duration, with 5 minutes' reading time; 50 marks in total representing 25% of the total qualification.

This paper draws on vocabulary and structures across all the themes and topics, students are assessed on their understanding of standard spoken Arabic by one or more speakers in a range of public and social settings. Students will respond to multiple-response and short-answer open-response questions based on a recording featuring male and female Arabic speakers. Section A consists of 12 questions, all set in English. Section B consists of two crossover questions from the Higher Paper, with instructions and texts set in Arabic.

The paper is based on five themes: (1) Identity and culture (2) Local area, holiday, travel (3) School (4) Future aspirations, study and work (5) International and global dimension. All themes and topics must be studied in the context of both the students' home country and that of countries and communities where Arabic is spoken. The vocabulary list must also be studied extensively to enable students to understand and express themselves with the themes, reading and listening to authentic material.

To prepare students adequately for this assessment, teachers should present and exploit a range of vocabulary relevant to each theme listed and build on the Key Stage 3 Programme of Study.

The Foundation Paper target levels 1 to 5. The 14 questions are ordered in such a way that Qs 1 to 5 target the lower levels, Qs 6, 7 and 8 target mid levels and Qs 9 to 17 target the higher levels respectively. The number of students that sat the paper was 741 in total.

Generally, responses were good and demonstrated evidence of preparation according to the specification. Some found selecting words to fill sentence gaps particularly challenging. Section B had two crossover questions, targeting levels 4 and 5. Following is a summary of how students scored in the 14 questions and how the questions matched the levels they were intended to target.

Section A

Questions 1 to 5.

Looking at the Statistics this year, the overall cohort did not perform as expected at this level, especially with Q1 and Q3 and Q4. The expectation is that these questions should be accessible to all students, including the lower levels (1 and 2), but we notice that only one item from 9, scored over 70% (Item 2i).

The question type of 1 box containing 3 out of seven choices is was challenging for students at this level, in the time they had to make their choices. Two thirds of the cohorts did not get the answers right. It would be worthwhile focusing students' practice on this type of question, to help them to develop their skills.

Questions 6 to 8

The students did better in these questions. With the exception of Q6, the rest of the questions were accessible to over 60% of the cohort. 42% of the cohort found Q6 accessible. The rest of the questions (7&8) the percentage ranged between 50% and 71%. This shows that these were relevant to the Foundation Level standards and differentiated between the students.

Questions 9 to 14

The students did well on these questions. Over 90% did well with items 10b and 10c, with a fairly wide variation among the other items ranging between 82% (item 9iii) and 32% (Q13).

Question 13 (a-e) and question 14 (a-e) were based on the environment and technology, shared with the higher tier and both stimulus and responses are in Arabic. The majority of students performed well, by using the provided words accurately to complete sentences, demonstrating confidence with listening skills and understanding of content.

Conclusion

Remembering that this paper was sat for the first time, it is worth considering a few issues as lessons learnt from the results above:

- some specific types of questions were challenging for students at this level (See specifically Qs. 3, 4, 6 and 11). Teachers should take extra care when training their students in all types of questions expected in the exams.
- train students on the themes chosen for the exam.
- focus on those questions that this year proved challenging to students e.g. the environment and industry.
- train students on exam techniques, making sure that students learn to read and understand the questions during the available time before attempting to answer them.