

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in French(4FR0/03)
Pearson Edexcel Certificate
in French(KFR0/03)

Paper 3: Speaking in French

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Publications Code UG038833*

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**International GCSE French
Unit3 Speaking in French
Examiner Report**

Section A

Most candidates delivered a clear presentation. It was in this part of the speaking test that candidates typically took the opportunity to settle into the speaking test environment. This is extremely important, as it bolsters confidence for the remainder of the speaking test. During the presentation, candidates may encounter moments of natural hesitation. This does not affect the potential mark for Presentation/Communication/Fluency.

Although the ensuing discussion is not always as developed as the presentation, candidates benefit from the opportunity to discuss a subject of their own choice. The transition from monologue was most effective in cases where candidates had not totally rehearsed the presentation, thus allowing for natural movement towards a dialogue. Most candidates attempted to respond in a spontaneous way, often leading to excellent interaction with the interviewer. On those rare occasions where candidates seemed to be meeting the interviewer for the first time, the dialogue was more difficult to initiate and sustain. Success in this component is due in large measure to the examiner's prior knowledge of the candidate's personality and linguistic ability. As per the previous specification, candidates tend to score marginally slightly higher marks here than during the two conversations in section B.

In section A, choice of image varied enormously. Images should contain three elements: people, objects and interaction. Candidates who chose photographs personal to them were typically more fluent and confident in delivery than where this was not the case. Internet images which had been printed off just for the purpose of providing a necessary stimulus proved more difficult to exploit in the majority of cases, as there were often items of unknown vocabulary/structures needed to expand on the photograph and talk about events such as "after this photograph was taken".

Pictures deployed most successfully were often printed in colour, as this enabled the interviewer to ask more specific questions. The most productive photos were often those with a lot happening in them, depicting in the foreground people to whom the candidate related and additional events/scenery in the background. However, in instances where candidates had no personal involvement with the image they had chosen, a surplus of "activity" in the image often led to confusion.

Some cartoon-style pictures were very successful in the case of more confident candidates who often gave very imaginative answers. Candidates performed well in nearly all instances where they had opted for images portraying family celebrations or events involving friends. Operating within this familiar and generally cordial context, candidates are effectively "on home territory" and are therefore more likely to settle into the ensuing discussion. The issues arising from these images tend to be

areas the candidate is willing and more importantly able to discuss, with a degree of elaboration. This allows candidates to influence the direction of the discussion.

Some candidates had the confidence to select rather more obscure subjects, with often excellent results. Teachers showed a high degree of expertise in diverting less confident candidates away from such complex scenarios. Although **during the discussion, it is a requirement that all three stages of questioning be included.** This involves questions relating directly to the picture, questions which go further and questions on the wider topic area. If there is no reference to the picture in the follow-up discussion, candidates cannot access a mark of more than 8/10 in the Presentation/Communication/Fluency grid.

Although some excellent practice was in evidence in respect of the questioning techniques used in the discussion, a small minority of interviewers seemed to pay insufficient attention to the presentation as they followed up with questions aimed at eliciting information already conveyed. Thankfully, closed questions were avoided in most instances. Equally, it was extremely unusual for candidates to be faced with questions beyond their linguistic ability.

Although most interviewers avoided this technique, there were a number of instances where interviewers continually interrupted candidates in mid response. This limits candidate performance, such as in cases where they are unable to expand responses via the use of subordination. However, in cases where an interviewer's question is misunderstood by a candidate, it is excellent practice to guide the candidate towards the correct theme. This was done in a most sensitive and constructive manner and represents interviewing at its best.

Section B

The Sample Assessment Materials indicate types of questions interviewers may wish to ask candidates. These examples are intended as a guide. If followed prescriptively, they do not elicit optimal outcomes. A small minority of interviewers simply asked questions from the published list. As a guidance tool, these sample questions support teachers who are not too familiar with this style of speaking test. A suitable range of question styles was evident in most recordings, allowing candidates to access their preferred range of structures and vocabulary. Indeed, individually targeted questions draw out the best performances from virtually all candidates.

Candidates should be allowed every opportunity to develop responses, express and clarify opinions and to show a degree of initiative. In terms of technique, some candidates did however seem reluctant to expand upon their answers when their performance suggested they had the skill to do so.

Whereas more confident candidates were expected to field a range of questions across the two conversations, interviewers were mindful of the need to promote good performances from less confident candidates by

initiating each conversation with very accessible questions, only proceeding to more developmental areas if and when candidates were clearly ready to proceed. In some cases, questions did need to be rephrased and this was well handled by interviewers.

Conduct of Examination

On the whole, centres are to be thanked for adhering to the requirements on timings, allowing candidates to access the whole time window available for each element.

In section A, there were some centres where most presentations lasted between twenty and thirty seconds, as opposed to the maximum one minute. Equally, discussions were often limited to about two minutes, as opposed to the maximum of three minutes. For the presentation, there were numerous instances where the maximum time limit was exceeded by a significant margin.

In Section B, each conversation should last about three minutes. In a number of cases, conversation 1 was too short, meaning that candidates were not able to access the full range of marks. Where the interviewer realises that the Conversation 1 was too short, this must never be compensated by making the second conversation too long. There are no minimum timings – short conversations are self-penalising.

Utterances which take place beyond the prescribed limits during any element of the speaking test cannot be rewarded, as each element is timed independently.

In most cases, the required transition between two conversations was made clear by the interviewer. Candidate responses tended to be much better in cases where interviewers showed a clear interest in what candidates were saying. Candidates are happy and indeed keen to share their experiences with interviewers who are clearly not working from a script of questions. In such instances, candidates are much more inclined to justify and expand replies.

Most centres adhered to the requirements concerning topics. However there were a number of instances where more than one conversation/discussion (in either section A or B) was on the same topic area. **Each topic area can only be covered once in any of the three parts of conversation – intentionally or unintentionally.**

Administrative Matters

Most centres offered an excellent standard of administration during this first series of the new specification. This was greatly appreciated and facilitated the assessment process.

Most CDs/USBs were correctly labelled. Accompanying documentation was usually presented with excellent attention to detail. In some cases, centre documentation was incomplete. Pictures relating to Section A were missing from some parcels or not attached to the Candidate cover forms. There were instances where signatures were missing from both Candidate cover sheets and registers. Sub-topic areas should be noted on the Candidate cover sheet. The current Specification includes the appropriate guidelines on pages 44-45. This section is helpful for all centres, as this is a new specification.

Centres are asked to check recordings and to verify that CDs/USBs are not faulty. It was pleasing to note that most interviewers were mindful to ensure that all recordings were clearly audible. Checking the first recording of the session immediately after the test is strongly recommended as this facilitates any necessary changes to recording procedures. Some recordings were too "quiet" or rendered almost inaudible due to obtrusive background noise. Equally, the microphone should always be placed in such a position that it favours the candidate rather than the interviewer.

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