



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
In Arabic (1AA0) Paper 2F: Speaking

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### **General comments:**

I would like to start with saying well done to all who took part, prepared well and approached the examination with a clear understanding of what was expected. For the most part, teacher-examiners introduced the centre and candidate details, used the sequencing grid to assign role plays and cards and introduced the themes during the general conversation. There were some issues with administration with the uploading of the new editable CS2 form. Some centres did not initially include the CS2 forms which caused some delay.

On the whole, candidates attempted the role play and picture-based tasks well and managed the length of the general conversation. Teachers generally conducted the examinations professionally, although some deprived their candidates of marks by altering the script, omitting one or more bullet points, or by inaccurate timings or not pitching the appropriate level of questions to candidates in the general conversation. In some cases, careless mistakes were made, offering the candidates the wrong cards – for instance Foundation when they had been entered for Higher – and this disadvantaged the candidates significantly as no marks could be awarded for the Role Play nor for Communication and Content on the Picture card. Some candidates seem to have been entered at the wrong level, with high achieving candidates who could have coped well at Higher Level being examined for Foundation and others struggling with the Higher-Level exam who could have performed better at Foundation.

Background noise appears to be a concern with some centres, to include loud corridor sounds, long school bells, playground noise, outside traffic due to open windows and loud voices from teachers and pupils in the adjoining room. Ideally, the test should be conducted in a quiet area of the centre. At times, hearing the candidate proved difficult. In some cases, the teacher-examiner was clear owing to the microphone pointing in their direction, rather than towards a quietly spoken candidate.

### **TASK 1: THE ROLE PLAY**

The role play is marked for Communication only, unlike the Picture-based Task and the Conversation. Short, relevant answers were all that were necessary to access the full marks. A number of candidates gave long and developed responses, which the teachers sometimes allowed or encouraged. This was often counterproductive, as the extraneous material was ambiguous or incorrect and so the full 2 marks could not be awarded. Such practice is unnecessary, as there are no extra marks for long, developed conversations.

Answers should be brief and to the point. Revision of question words is highly recommended as students often find the formation of questions difficult.

Occasionally, candidates ignored the question mark in front of the bullet point, making a statement instead of asking a question. At times, candidates asked a completely different question. Sadly, many marks were lost due to teachers straying from the scripted questions, paraphrasing, or adding extra information. It's crucial to understand that any unscripted interjection by the teacher-examiner that could advantage the candidate immediately invalidates the candidate's response. Some teacher-examiners failed to announce the role play number and/or the introduction as scripted, an oversight that could impact the candidate's performance.

Most candidates in Foundation were very confident to answer the questions with ease, however, some candidates found it difficult to express their ideas fluently; as a result, they chose to use English words mixed with Arabic dialect such as, mobile instead of الهاتف النقال, hotel/الفندق, holiday/العطلة, football/كرة القدم, hand ball/كرة اليد, coffee shop/المقهى.

Some candidates who are native speakers keep missing out question task or asking a question not on the teacher script.

When conducting the role play task, most teacher-examiners adhered to the script in the Teacher's booklet and followed the guidance perfectly. Unfortunately, some students lost marks because their teacher-examiner had re-phrased a question or repeated a question after a wrong answer had been given: no credit can be given for any subsequent answer, even if correct. A few teachers failed to read out the introduction as scripted, an omission that could affect the student's performance. More serious was the occasional omission of one of the questions and this clearly confused the students as well as losing them marks.

## **TASK 2: THE PICTURE-BASED TASK**

As with the Role Plays, teachers must keep to the script without changing or paraphrasing any of the questions and without adding any supplementary, unscripted questions. If they do, they will deprive their candidates of marks and any extraneous questions, together with the responses, are ignored.

Most candidates did well with describing the photo and offered a developed answer to this first bullet point. The candidates were well rehearsed into uttering useful expressions such as 'على يمين', 'في الصورة أستطيع أن أرى', 'في الصورة' which helped them to develop and extend their responses. There were many descriptions of clothing, often with incorrect word order. The more able were able to describe the action, some correctly using the present continuous. Unlike the Role Play, higher marks were awarded to extended answers: responses with at least three separate clauses which include a verb, offering different details, with the all-important justified opinions. A number of candidates often gave developed answers to the picture description, but thereafter gave much shorter, undeveloped responses to subsequent questions. It is therefore important to make use of the scripted follow-up questions, 'أو لماذا', 'أي شيء آخر؟' to encourage candidates to extend their responses and aim for higher marks. The third bullet point required the use of the past tense or time frame and the fourth required the future. Sometimes a candidate would use an infinitive or no verb at all. At times, there would be a mixture of tenses in the same response, creating ambiguity and losing marks on both Communication and Content and for Language. Most students were able to provide detailed descriptions of the photos. Many gave relevant and extended answers to the other points, with frequently correct references to past, present and future.

There were a few instances where teacher-examiners missed out one of the points, which resulted in the award of a lower Communication & Content mark. It is important to make use of the scripted follow-up questions, 'أو لماذا', 'أي شيء آخر؟' to encourage students to extend their responses and aim for higher marks. Equally, asking for 'أي شيء آخر؟ أو لماذا' when a student has already given a very full and detailed response is counterproductive.

## **TASK 3: THE CONVERSATIONS**

Candidates were required to participate in two conversations: the first on a topic selected and prepared by them, and the second one an unprepared topic selected by Pearson. An equal amount of time should have been allocated to each of the conversations and it is essential to keep strictly to the timings and avoid any imbalance between the two conversations. Most teachers kept to the timings and put their candidates at their ease using a friendly tone of voice and spoke clearly and slowly so that the candidates had little or no problems in understanding the questions. However, in some cases the teachers allowed the first conversation

to overrun, thus, restricting the time available for the second conversation. Since examiners stop listening when the full time is up, the shortness of the second conversation affected the final marks awarded. For the first conversation, candidates should be encouraged to introduce the topic they have chosen for up to one minute prior to the interaction with the teacher. It is equally important to ensure that they are not allowed to go on beyond the one minute and teachers should interrupt with their first question if the candidate seems determined to continue with a monologue.

Unsurprisingly, the first prepared conversation was often more successful than the second, and it was noticeable that some candidates frequently found it difficult to complete their sentences as they struggled to find the right vocabulary, grammatical structures or verb tenses. Some candidates were encouraged to use heavily rehearsed sentences and phrases in Conversation 1. At times, candidates who had been prepared in this manner gave robotic responses, which often appeared to show little understanding of the language. These candidates sometimes spoke in such a manner, almost 'reading' from their memory, that the intonation and pronunciation were heavily impacted and, at times, the candidate was difficult to understand at all. The accuracy in tenses and time frames appeared to be a challenge and impacted on the mark for linguistic knowledge and accuracy. The second, unprepared conversation often gave a better guide to the candidates' fluency and ability. Some teachers are still relying on a list of prepared questions and, in some extreme cases, all the candidates had been directed to prepare the same topic for their Conversation 1, even to the extent of providing identical introductions for the first minute. Moreover, the teacher read out exactly the same questions to each of the candidates so that the examination became a question-and-answer session instead of a spontaneous conversation.

The Conversations should be allowed to develop naturally, and the teachers should listen carefully to what the candidate is saying and build the conversation accordingly. It is certainly worth preparing topic related questions in advance in case the conversation grinds to a halt, but it is not a good idea to rely exclusively on prepared questions as this destroys spontaneity and the natural flow of conversation. There is a fine balance between allowing the candidate to show spontaneity and extend answers and interjecting to discourage scripted answers and/or very long pauses. Some candidates clearly were unable to give an answer to some questions, yet the teacher allowed some very long silences to occur. Conversely, some candidates would be narrating events well and the teacher interrupted with a difficult question and threw the candidate, creating an uncomfortable silence. Some candidates were disadvantaged because the teacher failed to ask any questions that required the use of a tense other than the present.

### **Areas for Improvement:**

There are few centres in which teachers who conducted the exams did not go through how to conduct speaking exam training, which misled as well as disadvantaged pupils' performance. Given below are examples to follow in next year's exam.

- Conduct the exam as expected, give introductions and instructions. Be aware of how to conduct the exam and what the targeted questions will be, especially picture-based questioning techniques to be in line with assessment criteria. It should not be a speech but a conversation.
- Avoid using English vocabulary.
- Allow candidate to take initiative.
- Avoid additional questions in picture-based section and very long, unnecessarily detailed responses from candidates in the role play and picture-based section.
- Give an introduction for each card and task in all recordings.
- Avoid having the teacher very close to the microphone and candidates far from it, which causes difficulty in listening to their recordings.
- Avoid noisy backgrounds, making it hard to understand.
- Make sure pupils are fully aware of assessment criteria when they are preparing for tasks.

### **Marking Principles agreed across all modern languages for ROLE PLAY TASK:**

- Where a candidate has used the wrong register, this is ignored unless it impedes communication. However, if the teacher strays from the script and changes the register of the question, this gives the candidate an unfair advantage, and the candidate's response is deemed to be invalid.
- If a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question, there can be no credit for a response made by the candidate.
- Where a candidate has offered an incorrect response to a question, the teacher may not repeat the question. If s/he does so and the candidate then gives a correct response, this is ignored.

- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not re-phrase any of the questions.

### **Marking Principles agreed across all the modern languages for PICTURE-BASED TASK:**

- Candidates must make reference to the visual image in response to the first bullet point question.
- Where a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question which is not scripted, there can be no credit for a response made by the candidate.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not rephrase any of the questions.
- If the teacher misses out a question or the question is not answered, the examiner will drop one band in the assessment grid for Communication and Content only.

### **Marking Principles that have been agreed across all modern languages for CONVERSATION TASK:**

- Foundation Conversations should last for between 3½ and 4½ minutes.
  - Timings begin with the candidate's first utterance.
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- Conversations that are too short are likely to be self-penalising.
  - Conversations that are too long: once the maximum time has passed, examiners stop listening and assessing at the end of the candidate's response to the current question.
  - An equal amount of time must be allocated to each Conversation.
  - Where the first Conversation is a monologue and has no interaction, candidates will be limited to a maximum score of 6 marks for Interaction and Spontaneity. The marks for Communication and Content and Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy, however, are unaffected.
- The most popular choices of Topics for the first Conversation were Holidays, School life, who am I, Family and especially Theme 5.