



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

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

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General comments:

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of centres and candidates who engaged with the speaking component of the Edexcel GCSE Arabic qualification this year. The majority of Teacher-Examiners demonstrated a sound understanding of the assessment requirements, adhering appropriately to the format by introducing candidate and centre details, correctly using the sequencing grid, and identifying the relevant themes during the general conversation. However, several administrative and procedural issues were noted which had a detrimental impact on candidate outcomes. A number of centres failed to submit the correct editable version of the Candidate Speaking form (CS2), continuing instead to upload non-editable PDF versions, which is no longer acceptable. Moreover, several CS2 forms were submitted incomplete, lacking critical information such as the Role Play card number or Picture-Based Task reference, making accurate moderation and standardisation more challenging. Of particular concern were entries from centres where Arabic is not taught as part of the curriculum. In these cases, candidates were entered for the qualification and then assessed by individuals who, although fluent Arabic speakers, lacked familiarity with the specification and formal requirements of the speaking assessment. As a result, the conduct of the examination in these centres was frequently inadequate: examiners deviated from the required script, failed to cover all necessary bullet points, mismanaged timings, or asked inappropriate or tier-incompatible questions during the general conversation. Such practices inevitably disadvantaged candidates, often resulting in a significant loss of marks. It is imperative that all centres ensure that the speaking component is conducted by a qualified teacher or examiner who is fully trained and well-versed in the expectations of the assessment and the content of the specification. In addition, issues with recording quality persisted in some centres, including excessive background noise (corridors, playgrounds, traffic) and poor microphone placement, which made candidate responses difficult to hear. Centres are strongly advised to review their procedures to ensure compliance with all assessment requirements so that all candidates are given a fair and equal opportunity to succeed.

TASK 1: THE ROLE PLAY

The Role Play task is assessed solely on the basis of Communication, unlike the Picture-Based Task and the General Conversation, which also assess linguistic accuracy and range. To achieve full marks, candidates are required to provide concise and relevant responses to each prompt. It is therefore important to note that extended or elaborated answers are neither expected nor beneficial in this part of the assessment. In several cases, Teacher-Examiners encouraged candidates to give long responses; unfortunately, this often-introduced ambiguity or inaccurate language, thereby preventing candidates from being awarded the full 2 marks for the task. Centres are reminded that brevity and clarity are key to success in this section.

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It is strongly recommended that students revise question forms thoroughly, as many continue to struggle with constructing appropriate questions. In particular, candidates frequently overlooked the question mark symbol in the task prompts, opting instead to make statements rather than pose questions. In some instances, the questions asked to bore no relation to the intended meaning of the original prompt, leading to the loss of marks.

A recurring issue observed was Teacher-Examiners deviating from the scripted questions by paraphrasing, adding supplementary information, or rephrasing prompts—practices that can unintentionally advantage or disadvantage candidates. It is essential to stress that any unscripted intervention that could influence a candidate's response renders that part of the task invalid for assessment purposes. Additionally, the omission of the role plays number or failure to deliver the introduction as outlined in the script is a procedural error that could undermine the candidate's performance and disrupt the structure of the assessment.

At Higher Tier, many candidates demonstrated confidence and responded with ease to the Role Play prompts. However, some candidates, including native or near-native speakers, either omitted one of the required tasks or substituted it with a question not found on the Teacher's script. This occurred more frequently when candidates attempted to improvise, often due to a lack of familiarity with the task structure. Furthermore, some candidates inserted English terms or Arabic dialect words in place of the appropriate Modern Standard Arabic vocabulary—for example, using “timetable” instead of جدول المدرسة, “ticket” for تذكرة, or “restaurant” for مطعم. While this often-reflected oral fluency in spoken Arabic, it detracted from the formal register required for the GCSE assessment and sometimes resulted in a loss of marks.

Overall, while many Teacher-Examiners conducted the task with commendable accuracy and professionalism, a number of procedural lapses—such as rephrasing questions, repeating prompts after incorrect responses, or omitting questions

altogether—led to unnecessary confusion and penalties for candidates. Centres are therefore urged to ensure that all examiners are fully trained and strictly adhere to the official Teacher's Booklet to maintain standardisation and ensure fairness across all assessments.

TASK 2: THE PICTURE-BASED TASK

In contrast to the Role Play, the Picture-Based Task rewards extended and detailed responses. To access the higher mark bands, candidates are expected to produce answers that demonstrate the use of three distinct tenses past, present, and future while also offering justified opinions and varied vocabulary. Most candidates began the task confidently, describing the picture with expressions such as "أفني الصورة أستطيع أن أرى" which enabled them to lay a strong foundation for their response. The most successful candidates were able to describe actions in progress, often using the present continuous correctly, and incorporated three or more clauses per response, with verbs and varied details that conveyed both clarity and engagement.

Teachers are reminded that, as with the Role Play, it is essential to adhere strictly to the script. Any alterations, paraphrasing, or addition of unscripted questions may lead to candidates being disadvantaged, as such responses are not creditable and are disregarded during marking. Some candidates produced strong, developed answers to the initial photo description but followed with shorter, less detailed responses to the subsequent prompts. To support candidates in extending their answers and reaching the upper mark bands, Teacher-Examiners should make appropriate use of the scripted follow-up questions such as "أي شيء آخر؟ أو لماذا" These prompts are valuable tools for eliciting further information; however, their overuse when a candidate has already given a comprehensive response may disrupt fluency and hinder performance.

The third and fourth bullet points are designed to assess the candidate's ability to use the past and future tenses respectively. While many candidates responded effectively, some produced ambiguous answers due to tense inconsistencies—such as combining different time frames within the same sentence—or failed to include a verb, relying instead on infinitives or isolated nouns. These errors impacted the marks awarded for both Communication and Language.

Overall, the majority of candidates demonstrated clear understanding of the task and were able to provide relevant, well-developed answers that included accurate references to past, present, and future events. However, there were a few cases where Teacher-Examiners omitted one or more bullet points, which inevitably limited the candidate's opportunity to demonstrate the full range of required skills and resulted in lower marks for Communication and Content. Centres are reminded of the importance of conducting this task in full accordance with the script to ensure that all candidates are given the best opportunity to perform to their potential.

TASK 3: THE CONVERSATIONS

This component requires candidates to participate in two conversations: one on a topic of their choice pre-prepared and one on a theme prescribed by Pearson Edexcel (unprepared). Equal time must be allocated to each conversation, and strict adherence to the prescribed timings is essential. Unfortunately, in a number of cases, this balance was not maintained.

While many Teacher-Examiners managed timings effectively and facilitated a calm and supportive examination environment, others allowed the first, prepared conversation to overrun. This often resulted in a significantly reduced time allocation for the second, unprepared conversation. As examiners are required to assess only the responses

delivered within the permitted timeframe, candidates whose second conversation was curtailed were disadvantaged in terms of marks, particularly for fluency, spontaneity, and grammatical range.

It is important to reiterate that candidates are permitted a one-minute introduction to their chosen topic at the start of the first conversation. Teachers must ensure that this does not extend into a prolonged monologue and should intervene with their first question as soon as the one-minute limit is reached. Over-rehearsed or memorised content also impacted performance in some cases, resulting in mechanical delivery, lack of spontaneity, and reduced clarity of pronunciation and intonation.

The unprepared conversation typically offered a more authentic demonstration of linguistic competence. However, where time had been mismanaged, or where the teacher relied on rigid questioning patterns, opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their full ability were limited. In some cases, the interaction lacked the natural flow of a genuine exchange, and key opportunities to elicit a range of tenses or encourage extended responses were missed.

Teachers are strongly advised to ensure a balanced and well-timed approach to both conversation tasks. The first should not dominate the assessment, and both sections must provide equal opportunity for candidates to showcase their language skills across the assessment criteria.

Areas for Improvement:

It was noted that in a small number of centres, the speaking examinations were conducted by individuals who had not undertaken appropriate training on the conduct of the assessment. This lack of familiarity with the specification and assessment criteria adversely affected the quality of the examinations and, regrettably, disadvantaged candidates. In order to ensure more consistent and fair assessment across centres, the following recommendations are offered for future series:

- Examinations must be conducted in full accordance with Pearson Edexcel's requirements, including clear introductions, task announcements, and strict adherence to the structure of each section. Teachers must be fully aware of the expectations and ensure that questioning, particularly during the picture-based task, reflects the assessment objectives. This part of the assessment should be treated as a genuine conversation, not a rehearsed monologue.
- The use of English or inappropriate code-switching must be avoided throughout the assessment.
- Candidates should be encouraged to take initiative and develop their answers where appropriate.
- Examiners must refrain from asking unscripted supplementary questions during the Role Play or picture-based tasks, and avoid prompting lengthy, unnecessary responses. Responses in these sections should be concise, focused, and relevant to the tasks.
- Each recording must begin with a clear verbal introduction, stating the card and task being attempted. This is critical for accurate moderation and marking.
- Care must be taken with audio quality: teacher examiners should ensure that the microphone is positioned equitably between themselves and the candidate, and that the environment is quiet and free from background noise that could interfere with the clarity of the recording.
- Centres are strongly encouraged to ensure that only trained and qualified teachers conduct the speaking exams. This will help to ensure a fair and

consistent assessment experience for all candidates and reduce the risk of procedural issues that may impact outcomes.

- Candidates must make direct reference to the visual image when responding to the first bullet point question.
- If a teacher changes or adds to the scripted question, the candidate's response to that altered or additional question cannot be credited.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but are not permitted to rephrase them.
- If a teacher omits a question, or the candidate fails to answer it, one band is deducted from the Communication and Content grid.