



Pearson

# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English as a Second Language (4ES0)  
Paper 3: Speaking

edexcel 

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## **Description**

This speaking examination is in three parts and lasts about 12 minutes. Each student is interviewed individually by an Examiner. All of the Examiner's questions are scripted. The speaking examination is recorded on a memory stick or disc and assessed by a Pearson examiner.

The Examiner may only select the topics for students once they are in the examination room.

In Part 1, the student is asked a set of questions on a familiar topic. This part of the examination lasts about 3–5 minutes. In this session, the topics were what electronic equipment students own, food, school, and holidays.

In Part 2, the student is given a task card and speaks at length (about 2 minutes) on the topic on the card. The student must answer the specific question mentioned on the task card. The student has 1 minute to prepare what s/he is going to say. In this session, the topics were sport and fitness, news and current events, stages of people's lives, and living in cities.

In Part 3, the student discusses in more depth issues related to the topic used in Part 2. This part of the examination lasts about 3 – 5 minutes.

Generally students had been very well prepared for the test and knew what to expect. It is devised to become increasingly difficult and this proved to be so for less able students, who struggled the most with Part 3. All students should be able to perform adequately in Part 1; Part 3 should be more challenging to C/D students; and Parts 2 and 3 should be challenging to F/G students.

## **Assessment Principles**

The test is assessed positively out of 20 marks using the grid printed in the specification (pages 20-21): Communicative ability and content 5 marks, Pronunciation and fluency 5 marks, Lexical accuracy and range 5 marks, and Grammatical accuracy and range 5 marks.

## **Students' responses**

Generally, the students performed well on this paper. They responded well to the structure of the test and seemed engaged by the content. The topics were ones which were generally familiar to them and they could call on their life experience to answer the questions. Topics which were particularly well received by students, including the less able ones, were electronic equipment and holidays (Part 1) and living in cities (Parts 2 and 3). Some students struggled in Part 1, Frames 2 and 3 (Food and School) with the word 'typical' and 'aspect'. Some students struggled in Part 3, Frame 1 (Sport and fitness) with the words 'facilities' and 'compulsory', and in Frame 2 (News and current affairs) with the word 'coverage'. Examiners tended to select the topic of news and current affairs (Parts 2 and 3, Card 2) less than the other topics. Weaker students or those who did not pay much attention to the news found this topic difficult, but it elicited language at the top end of the range from stronger students.

## **Part One**

The aim of Part One is to ask students about familiar topics and most were able to answer questions with ease. However, there were students who were monosyllabic and some Examiners did not ask the follow-up questions to help them extend their answers. These follow-up questions are an important feature of the paper and should be exploited whenever a student is less forthcoming. The purpose of the questions is to encourage the student to generate sufficient language on which to assess their ability based on the four criteria mentioned previously. In consequence, the role of the Examiner is to be aware of how responsive the student is and help them to reply fully to all questions.

Examiners should also spend at least three minutes on this section. If the student answers all of the questions on one of the topics, a second topic should be selected. Examiners from a number of centres did in fact do this, which enabled the student to produce more assessable language.

This is the least demanding part of the examination and most students handled it well. In a small minority of instances students did not understand one or more questions.

## **Part Two**

The aim of this section is to provide the student with an opportunity to speak at length on a topic for which they have been given 1 minute's preparation time. They are also required to answer a specific question.

The best students were able to expand on the topic in detail, giving examples and explanations to support their ideas and opinions. Their performance was also well organised and logical indicating that they had used the preparation time effectively to organise their thoughts.

The task card contains prompts to guide the student. These are ideas which the student may or may not choose to use in their response. Less able students tended to use these prompts as a list of items to comment on.

### **Part Three**

The aim of this part is to establish the upper reaches of the student's linguistic ability; it also becomes increasingly difficult. There are also follow-up questions to allow the student every opportunity to show the extent of their ability. Many students had been well-prepared and quite naturally gave their opinion and then provided more information by way of support.

Less able students struggled with this part of the examination. Some misunderstood questions or asked for help in interpreting certain questions.

### **Examiners**

The Examiners play an important role in enabling the students to show their linguistic ability and, although their performance is improving with each series, there are still problems which need to be highlighted.

Although most of the Examiners conducted the examination appropriately, there were others who did not follow the instructions contained in 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'. All of the wording and questions were provided either in the instructions or on the frame cards, yet some Examiners did not keep to the questions both in Part 1 and in Part 3.

Those Examiners who did not follow instructions did not appear to grasp the thinking behind the structure and purpose of each section of the test, and when they deviated from the script it made the task of the assessor more difficult. Whilst the Examiner may have been endeavouring to make the exchange seem more natural, it is felt that on occasion they disadvantaged students by asking closed questions thereby depriving them of an opportunity to extend their answers. Others asked particularly obscure questions which were very difficult for students to answer. In Part 1, several questions had a follow up prompt to encourage students to extend their answers. Some Examiners did not use this prompt whilst others tagged it on to the original question so that weaker students still did not extend their answers.

In Part 3, several Examiners did not ask questions in groups as indicated on the frame card but selected questions somewhat haphazardly. The questions in Part 3 are grouped together thematically and aim to become increasingly difficult. This allows students to build on their ideas as this part of the test progresses. In Part 3, several questions had a follow-up question to encourage students to talk more. Some Examiners failed to ask the second part of the question, and this prevented students from developing their ideas more fully and thereby displaying their ability to use more complex language. Some Examiners, as in Part 1, tagged the follow up prompt onto the original question, thus extending the question and making it more difficult for weaker students in particular to understand. A number of Examiners did not ask an adequate number of questions in Part 3; this also prevented students from displaying the full range of their language abilities.

### **Other observations concerning Examiners**

1. Some Examiners needed to prepare more for the examination and have a clear idea of how the exam was organised and what the questions were before they started. In some instances, there were long pauses during the examination as Examiners tried to work out what the next section entailed. This situation must be avoided as it is potentially unsettling for students.
2. At the start of the examination the Examiner must repeat the student's name and number for clarity. It is obviously essential that this be accurate. Examiners are asked to be *extremely careful* when stating student names and numbers as several errors did occur this session. Examiners are asked to use the students name as recorded on the attendance record, *not* their 'English' name.
3. Some Examiners invented their own questions and/or commented on students answers. In such instances, this was to the detriment of the student. Examiners are required to adhere strictly to the questions on the card, in the order in which they appear. Examiners are assured that adhering to the script does indeed benefit the students.
4. Some questions have additional prompts to encourage students to extend their answers. These prompts should be used as necessary and not simply tagged on to the end of the original question.
5. Some Examiners used words of encouragement such as 'that's good', 'OK' and 'that's very interesting'. These should be avoided as they may mislead the students about their performance.

6. In some instances, such words of encouragement also interfered with the clarity of the students response for assessment purposes or seemed to be interpreted by the student as an indication that they should stop speaking, which led to shorter answers than the student may otherwise have produced.
7. Students may ask for a question to be repeated. Examiners should not take this as a cue to paraphrase the question but should simply repeat the question as given. However, if a student specifically asks for clarification of a question or word from a question, Examiners should give a brief explanation.
8. Some Examiners did not give students time to formulate their response to a question or paraphrased the questions before they were asked to do so by the student. On occasion, Examiners provided vocabulary or even ideas when students faltered, not allowing time for students to overcome any difficulty independently.
9. Examiners needed to listen to what the students were saying to avoid irrelevant or repetitive questions from being asked. On occasion, Examiners asked a question that the student had just answered in their development of the previous question. In such cases, Examiners should move on to the next question rather than ask a redundant question. This would not be seen as deviating from the script.
10. Examiners needed to check whether a suitable recording of the student had been obtained before dispatching the tape for assessment. On occasion, blank discs or partial recordings were sent for assessment.
11. Examiners must use the latest cover sheet and must complete a cover sheet for each student.

## **Students**

If a student is speaking quietly, the Examiner should ask her/him to speak up.

## **Length of the test**

Examiners are reminded that the test should last about 12 minutes. In general, the timings were much more consistent across centres this year and, as already mentioned, many Examiners used an additional frame in Part 1 to ensure this was long enough. Unfortunately, there were still some centres where the tests were too short. They are reminded that Part 1 should last about 3 minutes not including the initial clarification of name and student number and Part 3 should last about 5 minutes.

## **Administrative matters**

1. As mentioned above, Examiners are reminded to use the *latest* student cover sheet. They should complete one for each student and include the following:

- Centre Name
- Centre Number
- Student Name
- Date of test
- Name of Examiner
- Details of the recording
- Frames used in the test

2. Examiners are not required to mark the student's performance.

3. Many of the recordings were received late this year. Centres are reminded that the Paper 3 (Speaking) examination must be conducted up to and including the date of the written examinations (Paper 1 and 2) and must be dispatched within 48 hours of completion of examining.

## **Equipment**

Whilst in general recording quality was good, some of the recordings were of extremely poor quality and it was very difficult for the assessor to hear what students were saying. Examiners must ensure that good quality recordings are obtained of all students. It is recommended that the equipment, recording quality and level as well as positioning of microphone be checked carefully before the start of the examination to ensure that the best possible recording of the student is obtained.



## **Room**

The room selected for the examination was not always a quiet one, and many distracting noises can be heard on the recordings such as traffic, vacuum cleaners, music, building work and people moving about outside. School bells ringing and consequent noise of students on break or moving to another lesson interfered with the quality of some the recordings.

On occasion a room was selected which had such poor acoustics that it affected the quality of the recordings. It is requested that a quiet room with good acoustics be used for the examination. Students were also distracted by people moving in/out or around the exam room. This situation is always disadvantageous to the student and must be avoided.

## **Mobile Phones**

Examiners should remind all students to switch off their mobile phones before entering the exam room. It is also requested that Examiners do the same. It is in the interests of students for this advice to be followed.

## **Grade boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>