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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English as a Second Language (4ES1) Paper 03:
Speaking

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General comments

This has been another successful series. Centres should be congratulated for preparing their candidates so well for this unit and we hope that both our candidates and centres are pleased with the results.

This speaking examination is a scripted interview between the candidate and interlocutor, which is split into three parts and should last between 9 – 12 minutes in total. The interlocutor should only select the topics for candidates once they are in the examination room so candidates do not know what the topics or questions will be.

In the first part of the examination, candidates are asked to respond to questions giving information and expressing opinions on a familiar topic. This part of the exam should last between 2 – 3 minutes. Interlocutors are able to use more than one of the cards in Part 1 if necessary (if, for example, only brief answers are given on the first topic card). If candidates do not elaborate beyond one or two word responses in this part, interlocutors should use the follow up prompt questions to ask candidates for more detail (prompt questions on the cards are typically 'Why is that?' or 'Tell me about that').

In Part 2 of the examination, candidates are asked to give a talk on a given topic. The candidate must answer the specific question mentioned on the task card. Candidates have 1 minute preparation time using a prompt card that contains bullet points to help candidates to consider what they might cover in their talk. Candidates are able to make notes in this time but the notes must be handed in before the talk commences. The talk should last for up to 2 minutes and the interlocutor must stop the candidate at the end of the two-minute period if they are still talking.

In the final part, Part 3, the interlocutor leads the candidate in an extended discussion on the topic from Part 2, for a target time of between 5 and 6 minutes. The questions for this part are organised into three sections, with the earlier questions based on more familiar and everyday contexts, before moving on to questions on more abstract themes. In Part 3, interlocutors do not need to go through each group of three questions methodically for each candidate; for those candidates who lack the necessary linguistic skills to be able to respond to the final group of questions, the interlocutor might choose not to ask them. However, the interlocutor should aim to provide candidates with sufficient opportunities in order to be able to demonstrate their skills.

In this series, the majority of candidates attempted all three parts of the examination despite the increasing level of difficulty and level of unfamiliarity of both the tasks and the questions. Candidates should be congratulated for their efforts.

Assessment Principles

The total number of marks available for the Speaking examination is 40 marks in this specification, with 10 marks available for each of the following areas:

- communicative ability and content
- pronunciation and fluency
- lexical range and accuracy
- grammatical range and accuracy

Please see pages 24-25 of the specification for the assessment criteria for this unit.

Remember that this exam is externally assessed by Pearson Edexcel. All Speaking examinations must therefore be recorded and the audio files then uploaded to the Learner Work Transfer (LWT) portal.

For the January examination series, the speaking examinations may be completed from mid-November up to, and including, the date of the last written examinations in January. For the June examination series, the speaking examinations may be completed from mid-April up to, and including, the date of the last written examinations in June.

Candidates' responses

Part One

The aim of Part One is for candidates to acclimatise to the interview style examination and to build confidence in the early stages to develop ideas and use appropriate vocabulary, in more familiar, everyday contexts. In some instances, candidates provided brief, often one-word, responses to the questions in Part 1. The follow-up questions should be used in these circumstances to help candidates to extend their responses. The role of the interlocutor is to be aware of how responsive the candidate is and help them to reply fully to all questions, which could either be by allowing candidates sufficient time to speak before moving on to the next question or by asking the follow-up questions in this part.

The guide time for this section is 2 – 3 minutes. If the candidate answers all of the questions on one of the topics with time to spare, a second topic should be selected. Interlocutors from a number of centres did in fact do this, which enabled candidates to talk about different ideas and demonstrate their accurate use of language. This is the least demanding part of the examination and, as with previous series, most candidates handled it well.

Card 1: Favourite singer or group

Candidates spoke about a range of different singers and groups, which were known internationally or well-known within their own countries. When explaining why they liked their favourite singer or group, candidates spoke about their favourite songs, the social media presence of their favourite singer or group and special performances that they remember. Most candidates were able to describe a performance they had seen either in person or online.

Candidates should be reminded that the speaking test is an opportunity for them to demonstrate their productive skills and they should be encouraged to show the range of vocabulary and structures of language that they can use, even if it means embellishing some of the points they make.

Card 2: Winter activities

This was an accessible topic, with the vast majority of candidates able to identify activities they like to do in the winter, such as skiing or doing activities inside, such as playing board games or going to the cinema. More successful candidates were able to talk in detail about what they do not like about the winter - not just the cold weather but the consequences of this, such as not being able to see friends and family.

Candidates were often able to talk about where they would like to visit in the winter and who they like to spend time with in the winter.

In the most part, the follow up prompts were used appropriately to encourage candidates to elaborate on their answers. Some interlocutors read the follow up prompts as a matter of course, without listening to what candidates had said. The follow up prompts are only intended for use when necessary.

Card 3: Use of social media

This task card proved just as accessible as the other two cards, with candidates able to talk about their own experiences using social media. Many candidates talked about using social media to keep in touch with friends and family, to research information and to keep up to date with the news.

A variety of social media sites were mentioned, including sites specifically used in individual countries. This proved a talking point for some candidates as they were able to explain the specific reasons for using particular social media sites, such as how they use certain sites to communicate with people in their country and then other sites to keep in touch with people all over the world.

In the most part, candidates were able to identify something they do not like about social media sites, such as censorship or potential problems with online safety. However, some candidates could benefit from being reminded that the speaking test

is an opportunity for them to demonstrate their productive skills and they should be encouraged to show the range of vocabulary and structures of language that they can use, even if it means embellishing some of the points they make. As mentioned earlier in this report, the speaking examination is not a test of true fact or knowledge, and, although it can help candidates to draw on their own real-life experiences, the answers candidates give can be from their imagination.

Part Two

The aim of this section of the examination is for candidates to speak at length, for between 1 and 2 minutes, on a given topic. Candidates must answer the specific question on the card the interlocutor has given them.

For this part of the examination, candidates have 1 minute of preparation time. During this time, candidates are allowed to make notes but the notes must be handed in at the end of the preparation time.

The task cards contain bullet point prompts as a stimulus for ideas for candidates. These are ideas that candidates may or may not choose to use in their responses. Many candidates used the bullet points this series to generate ideas and, on the whole, talks were well organised and logical, indicating that candidates had used the preparation time effectively to organise their thoughts.

The most successful candidates were able to move away from just following the bullet points on the task cards to generate their own ideas but, nevertheless, clearly used the bullet points as a starting point. They were able to expand on the topics in detail, giving examples and explanations to support their ideas and opinions, often using a variety of vocabulary and language structures.

Card 1: The importance of following rules

Candidates were often able to give detailed talks on this topic, using a wide range of examples based on their own experiences of having to follow rules at home, when playing sport and at school. Many were also able to talk about rules their family members have to follow at work. The majority of candidates spoke about the need to follow rules for safety, such as when playing sport and in the workplace, to progress in education and to keep healthy.

The bullet points on the prompt card were used by many candidates to structure their talks. Some went through the bullet points methodically. The more successful candidates, who were awarded the higher marks, tended to talk more holistically about the importance of following rules but nevertheless used the bullet points as prompts throughout. Less successful candidates provided more of a list of different rules, without considering their importance.

Many candidates had to be asked to stop at the end of the two minutes, having not reached the end of their talk; candidates evidently had lots to say. Do allow candidates to finish the sentence before asking them to stop, if two minutes have elapsed.

Card 2: The importance of a healthy diet

On the whole, candidates had a breadth of knowledge on the subject of the importance of having a healthy diet, perhaps a topic they have studied at school or one they have been advised on at home. Many candidates talked about the significance of a healthy diet as a way of improving both their mental and physical health, the impact it has on their studies and how it helps them when playing sport. The bullet points therefore proved to be helpful for many candidates.

More successful candidates did not just follow the bullet points but also reflected on their own experiences, such as the impact of not having a healthy diet has had on them, such as a lack of motivation or not being able to sleep.

Even less successful candidates were able to express an opinion on the importance of having a healthy diet, despite some candidates running out of ideas about what to say. Nevertheless, candidates tended to have sufficient ideas to convey what they eat in order to maintain a healthy diet.

Card 3: The importance of charities in the world

The topic on the importance of charities in the world elicited a range of responses, with many candidates using the bullet points on the task card to talk about how charities have helped particular causes in their own countries.

Some candidates struggled to identify individual charities but, on the whole, were successful in talking about the impact charities have had, either locally, nationally or internationally. More successful candidates went on to talk about what would happen if charities did not exist and the impact it would have on their causes.

As with the other tasks, the more successful candidates tended to make the most of the preparation time, making notes about ideas they could speak about in their talk.

Part Three

The aim of this part of the examination is to provide candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of language structures and vocabulary for the higher marks. The questions in this section become increasingly difficult. Like with Part 1, there are follow-up questions to allow candidates every opportunity to demonstrate the extent of their skills. The follow-up questions should be used as a prompt for candidates if they run out of ideas to say and not just read as a matter of course along with the initial question.

Centres should be reminded that candidates do not need to be asked every single question in this section; the interlocutor should decide which questions to ask each candidate individually, according to their language skills. Equally, it might be that more successful candidates focus on the final triad of questions, in order to demonstrate the more complex language structures and vocabulary expected for the upper marks.

Card 1: The importance of following rules

The vast majority of candidates were able to respond to the questions based on familiar contexts.

Some candidates struggled with the question about why some people choose not to follow rules but, on the whole, most candidates were able to give a reason, with some even suggesting that people do not engage with rules if they do not understand why they are needed or if they feel that the rules have been put in place without the people who have to follow the rules having a say in them.

There were some interesting responses to the question about what new rules should be introduced, including rules relating to everyone having to contribute to the community in some way.

The final question about whether rules should be the same in every country also produced some thoughtful responses, with many candidates reflecting on the differences in traditions and cultures across the world.

Card 2: The importance of a healthy diet

Many candidates used an impressive range of vocabulary in this part. The topic proved to be one of current interest to many of the candidates. All candidates tended to have plenty of ideas in relation to the first three questions, including what healthy and unhealthy food they like and their preference between the two options.

When responding to the second trio of questions, many candidates offered interesting answers to the question about how people could be encouraged to have a healthy diet, including using social media influencers and more education (particularly from a young age). If candidates did indeed speak about the possible influence of famous people in response to this question, it did mean that the penultimate question on the card was redundant. However, this was not a problem as the candidates had more than enough to say in relation to the other questions to demonstrate the necessary skills.

The questions on more unfamiliar contexts enabled candidates to express abstract ideas, with many giving insightful answers regarding how advertising impacts people's diets and how people's modern lifestyles can impact on their diets.

If candidates struggled to talk for the duration of 2 minutes for the talk in Part 2, the questions in Part 3 tended to provide candidates with the opportunity to convey ideas they might not have otherwise thought to say. In many cases, candidates had the appropriate ideas and vocabulary but they just needed to be prompted, through the questions, to express them.

Card 3: The importance of charities in the world

The questions for this topic appeared to be accessible, with the vast majority of candidates able to offer at least one idea in response to each question, even the questions on more abstract ideas.

It was interesting to hear the candidates' ideas in relation to what people can do to support charities, with candidates often talking about local charity events and fundraisers. Some candidates also offered a number of interesting ways to encourage people to support charities, including education and even incentives.

As with the other Part 3 cards, there were a number of thoughtful comments in response to the final trio of questions, particularly the question asking candidates if one day there would be no need for charities. Many candidates reflected on the ongoing need for charities, unless there is intervention from other bodies, such as private companies or governments.

The majority of candidates were able to respond to the full range of questions in this part and proved knowledgeable in this area, showing some confidence. Less successful candidates did need prompting at times but, on the whole, they managed to respond to the questions in an appropriate manner. Even when asked the final question, the majority of candidates were able to offer a brief response.

It is worth noting that a positive approach is taken in the application of the mark scheme; marks are not specifically deducted for occasional slips or errors and a holistic approach is taken in assessing what ideas and skills candidates demonstrate.

Interlocutors

Interlocutors play an important role in enabling the candidates to show their linguistic skills. The majority of interlocutors conducted the examinations in an appropriate manner and should be praised for their professional manner.

Nevertheless, some interlocutors 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 interlocutors did not keep to the questions both in Part 1 and in Part 3. Please do remember to follow the precise wording in the Handbook and question cards.

Those interlocutors 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 interlocutor may have been endeavouring to make the exchange seem more natural, it is felt that on occasion they disadvantaged candidates by asking closed questions and thereby depriving them of an opportunity to extend their answers. Others asked particularly obscure questions that were very difficult for candidates to answer. In Part 1, several questions had a follow-up prompt to encourage candidates to extend their answers. Some interlocutors did not use this prompt whilst others tagged it on to the original question, thus extending the question, making it more difficult for less successful candidates in particular to understand.

In Part 3, several interlocutors 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 candidates to build on their ideas as this part of the test progresses. In Part 3, several questions had a follow-up question to encourage candidates to talk more. Some interlocutors failed to ask the second part of the question, and this prevented candidates from developing their ideas more fully and thereby displaying their ability to use more complex language, as with Part 1.

A number of interlocutors did not ask an adequate number of questions in Part 3; this also prevented candidates from displaying the full range of their language abilities.

It is hoped that the advice below will act as useful guidance for interlocutors in fulfilling their role in the speaking examination.

Recommendations for interlocutors:

1. Remember to follow the instructions and script in the Handbook and question cards, exactly as they appear. This is to ensure consistency for all candidates taking the speaking examination.
2. Check what the format of the examination is before commencing the Speaking test. In some instances, candidates were left waiting whilst the interlocutor was trying to ascertain what the next part of the examination was. This can be unsettling for candidates.
3. Read through the questions before the start of the examination to increase familiarity with the questions and to rehearse accurate intonation and pronunciation ready for the examination.
4. At the start of each recording, in addition to asking each candidate for their name and candidate number, interlocutors should repeat the candidate's name and candidate number for clarity. Remember to use the candidate's name as recorded on the attendance register, not their 'English' name. Several

interlocutors did recognise the need for this and asked the candidate to state their full name when it was the candidate who gave only an 'English' name.

5. All candidates must be asked the questions on the cards (for the current series), in the order in which they appear. Interlocutors must not devise their own questions.
6. The follow-up questions (which appear in brackets) on the cards should only be asked when necessary, to encourage candidates to elaborate on their ideas. They should not just be tagged on to the original question as a matter of course. Interlocutors should exercise their professional judgement as to when the follow up questions should be used.
7. Try to avoid using positive words of encouragement such as 'that's good', 'OK' and 'that's very interesting', as such phrases may mislead the candidates about their performance.
8. If candidates ask for a question to be repeated, just repeat the question and do not just paraphrase the question as a matter of course. Nevertheless, if a candidate specifically asks for clarification of a question or word from a question, interlocutors should give a brief explanation.
9. Some interlocutors did not give candidates time to formulate their response to a question, or paraphrased the questions before they were asked to do so by the candidate.
10. On occasion, interlocutors provided vocabulary or even ideas when candidates faltered, not allowing time for candidates to overcome any difficulty independently. Interlocutors are reminded that they should never correct a candidate's use of language or suggest any vocabulary.
11. Interlocutors should listen to what candidates are saying to avoid irrelevant or repetitive questions from being asked. On occasion, interlocutors asked a question that the candidate had just answered in their development of the previous question. In such cases, interlocutors should move on to the next question rather than ask a redundant question. This would not be seen as deviating from the script.
12. Interlocutors are reminded that Part 2 is designed to elicit a 'long turn' from the candidate and that the interlocutor should not speak during this turn. Interlocutors should not indicate orally that they are listening as this could potentially interrupt the candidate.
13. Interlocutors should check whether a suitable recording of the candidate has been obtained before uploading the audio file to LWT for assessment. On

occasion, incomplete or poorly recorded audio files were uploaded for assessment.

14. Please remember to complete an assessment cover sheet for each candidate. The latest cover sheet can be found in the most recent version of the Handbook. These should be uploaded, alongside the audio files, to the LWT portal.

Candidates

Candidates should be reminded to speak as clearly as possible during the examination. Whilst it was evident that some candidates had a naturally quiet speaking voice, this did sometimes make it difficult to ascertain precisely what was being said. Interlocutors should also check where the microphone is placed.

Candidates should be reminded to speak at a suitable pace, as some candidates, perhaps nervously, spoke so fast it was difficult to determine meaning at times. It is worth reminding candidates that pace and fluency form part of the assessment criteria.

Length of the test

Interlocutors are reminded that the test should last between 9 and 12 minutes. Although there is no set requirement for candidates to speak for a minimum amount of time, please be aware that candidates will need sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their linguistic ability, especially for the higher marks. Where candidates do not speak for the time suggested, there is less of an opportunity for them to demonstrate the skills expected in the higher levels.

Administrative matters

1. Please remember to use the current cover sheet for this specification, which is available in the accompanying Handbook. One cover sheet should be included for each candidate and the following details should be included:

- Centre Name
- Centre Number
- Candidate Name
- Date of test
- Name of interlocutor
- Frames used in the test

2. Interlocutors are not required to mark the candidate's performance. This unit is externally assessed by Pearson.

3. The deadline for candidates to complete the Speaking exam is the date of the last written exam (Paper 1 or Paper 2 - whichever comes last in the series).

4. Please also remember to upload the attendance register to the LWT portal. This allows examiners to see which candidates were present to complete the examination.

Equipment

Whilst in general recording quality was good, some of the recordings were of poor quality and it was difficult for the assessor to hear what candidates were saying at times. Interlocutors must ensure that good quality recordings are obtained of all candidates. 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 candidate is obtained.

Room

The Speaking exam should be conducted in an appropriate setting, away from possible distractions caused by noise, such as traffic, music or people moving about outside the room. It would be worthwhile for centres to try recording in the examination room before the live examination just to check the acoustics of the room, as this sometimes affected the quality of recordings. A room in a quiet location with good acoustics allows candidates more of an opportunity to focus on the questions they are asked and for them not to be distracted in any way.

Mobile Phones

Interlocutors should remind all candidates to switch off their mobile phones before entering the exam room. It is also requested that interlocutors do the same. Signals from mobile phones can interfere with the recording and make assessment difficult. It is therefore in the interests of candidates for this advice to be followed.

We would like to thank you for entering candidates for this unit, which recognises the fundamental importance of speaking skills.

We wish you every success in future series for this qualification.