



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

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

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2024

Publications Code 4ES1_E_2406_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

General comments

Centres are thanked for choosing Pearson Edexcel as their International GCSE English as a Second Language provider. We very much hope that both our candidates and centres are delighted with their results.

The Summer 2024 series was yet another successful series. The 4ES1 03 paper performed well and was very similar in performance to previous series. There were no errors in the paper, no erratum notices and there were no enquiries from centres following the examination.

Centres are once again congratulated on preparing their candidates so well, especially during another very challenging year. As always, the recordings are enjoyable to listen to and a pleasure to mark.

Overview

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 an opinion 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.

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.

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 new Learner Work Transfer (LWT) portal. Centres should be commended for adjusting so well to this new system for submitting candidates' work.

For the January examination series, the speaking examinations may be completed at 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, 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 most candidates handled it well.

Card 1: An important person

It was clear by listening to responses that candidates engaged well with this topic. Candidates chose a range of different people when responding to this task, including family members, friends, famous role models and a few candidates even chose themselves as the important person to talk about.

Candidates were often able to give quite detailed reasons for choosing their important person, including support that the person has given them as well as what the particular person has taught them. Whilst some candidates did find the question 'Is there anything you do not like about [this important person]?' slightly more challenging, many did come up with an idea. Even those candidates who could not think of anything to say tended to be able to say that they liked everything about their chosen person.

The final question on the card, about other important people, also worked well. By this stage of part one of the examination, candidates had clearly got used to the assessment environment and were often able to talk in detail about other important people. Many candidates described these important people, talked about their qualities and gave detailed reasons for choosing to speak about them.

In the most part, the follow up prompts were used appropriately to encourage candidates to elaborate on their answers. However, as with the other cards, some

interlocutors read the follow up prompts as a matter of course, without listening to what candidates had said.

Card 2: The days of the week

This was an accessible topic with the vast majority of candidates able to identify their favourite day of the week without undue difficulty and they were also able to say who they like to spend time with on that particular day of the week. As with the third question on the first topic card, some candidates found the question 'Is there anything that you do not like about [the favourite day of the week]?' a little more challenging. However, many candidates were able to think of something about that day of the week that they do not like or, if not, were able to say that they liked everything about that day of the week.

Again, as with the first topic card, the final question on the card proved to be accessible. Candidates had clearly had time to settle into the conditions of the examination and so, when asked which day is their least favourite day of the week, candidates were able to think of a day and give a reason without the need for prompting from the interlocutor. It is possibly no surprise that many candidates chose the first day of the week that they attend school as their least favourite day.

Some candidates could benefit from being reminded that the speaking test is an opportunity for them to demonstrate their productive skills. Candidates 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 3: Free time

The performance of candidates responding to this topic was comparable to the responses to the other two topics in this part of the examination.

The majority of candidates were able to talk about the activities they like to do in their free time without undue difficulty. They were also able to identify places they like to go in their free time and state who they like to spend time with. Many candidates did not need to be prompted to explain why they like to go to the places they spoke about or spend time with the people they identified. However, some candidates, having said very little, could have benefitted from being asked the follow-up prompts on the card.

The slightly more challenging question for candidates on this card was the final question on the card: 'What other activities would you like to do if you had more free time?' However, there were a number of particularly interesting responses, with ideas including volunteering, travelling and learning a new language.

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 fact, 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 the candidate may or may not choose to use in their response. 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.

As has been the case in previous series, the most successful candidates were able to move away from just following the bullet points on the task cards to generate ideas but, nevertheless, clearly used the bullet points as a starting point as a step into the question. 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 role of mobile phones in our lives

Candidates were often able to give detailed talks on this topic, giving a range of ideas as to the role of mobile phones in our lives, often based on their own experiences. The majority of candidates spoke about the need for mobile phones in our lives for communication, education and safety.

The bullet points on the prompt card were used by many candidates to structure their talks. Some went through the bullet points methodically, expanding on each idea. The more successful candidates, who were awarded the higher marks, tended to talk more holistically about the role of mobile phones in our lives but, nevertheless, used the bullet points as prompts throughout. Less successful

candidates provided more of a list of different ideas in relation to the topic, without going into much detail.

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 having plans for the future

Many candidates talked thoughtfully about the importance of having plans for the future, with many talking about their own future plans and then explaining the importance of planning to be able to achieve their goals. Candidates covered a range of topics, including plans they have for the next steps in their education, career aspirations and things they would like to do with their friends and family.

There were a number of really interesting responses to this topic, which explained in detail about the need to have clear future goals so that people can work backwards from these goals in order to know the different stages that need to be completed in order to achieve them.

Even the less successful candidates were able to express what their future plans are, such as visiting a particular country or attending college, despite not saying why it is important to have plans for the future.

Card 3: The importance of parks and green spaces

This topic proved to work well, with candidates able to talk about the parks and green spaces in the area where they live and then explain what they use them for. Many candidates talked about meeting friends there, attending community events and playing different sports.

The ideas on the card did appear to help candidates to cover a good deal of ground when talking about this topic, with many candidates speaking for the full two minutes.

As with the other topics in this part of the examination, the less successful candidates listed what they use parks and green spaces for. The more successful candidates clearly linked how they used parks and green spaces to the importance of having them. They were often able to speak more generally about the benefits of parks and green spaces to the wider community and the benefits they bring, even if candidates did not necessarily personally benefit from the spaces in such ways.

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 along with the initial question.

Less successful candidates in this part of the examination did struggle with some of the questions. Centres should be reminded that candidates do not need to be asked every single question in this section; the interlocutor should decide which triad of 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 role of mobile phones in our lives

The vast majority of candidates were able to respond to the questions based on familiar contexts without any difficulty at all and often without any need for further prompts from the interlocutor.

There were interesting responses to the question about the age at which young people should be allowed to have their own mobile phone. Many candidates talked about the age at which they were allowed their own phone and talked about the concerns of their parents/carers about safety and screen time. There were also some thoughtful responses to the question about whether mobile phones should be banned in schools. Again, many candidates used their own experiences of using mobile phones in school, explaining how useful they find using their mobile phone to help with their schoolwork. However, some candidates were very honest by admitting that using their mobile phone can distract them from their studies when at school.

The question about whether life would be better without mobile phones worked well, with many candidates offering their own viewpoint and contrasting that with what other people in their life would say.

Card 2: The importance of having plans for the future

Many candidates expressed a range of interesting ideas when responding to this task card. The topic proved to be one of current interest to many of the candidates, as they think about the next steps in their education and possible future career paths.

All candidates tended to have plenty of ideas in relation to the first three questions, including the different places they would like to travel to in the future, where they would like to live in the future and what job they would like to have in the future.

When responding to the second trio of questions, many candidates offered interesting answers to the question about the age at which people should start thinking about what job they would like to have in the future. A number of candidates talked about when they first started to think about their future plans and how, for some professions, it takes lots of planning in terms of education routes and appropriate finances.

The questions on more unfamiliar contexts enabled candidates to successfully express abstract ideas, with many giving particularly insightful ideas regarding the changes there will be to our lives in the future. Quite a number of candidates talked about the growing use of artificial intelligence and how this will become an even bigger part of our lives. Their knowledge on this subject was nothing but impressive.

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 parks and green spaces

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

It was interesting to hear the range of answers given regarding why some people think that parks and green spaces are not important, with many candidates

explaining the need for housing and other buildings for the local community. There were also some thoughtful responses to the question about who should be responsible for looking after parks and green spaces. There were many mature responses explaining how it is the responsibility of everyone in the community to take care of the local environment.

Even the less successful candidates were able to respond to the full range of questions in this part and proved knowledgeable on this topic, able to draw on their own experience and showing some confidence, despite perhaps not having the accuracy of expression. Interlocutors should be reminded of the need to use the follow up prompts when candidates run out of ideas as a way of encouraging candidates to elaborate further. In some cases, it was evident that candidates might have benefited from this.

In the final triad, the last question, 'What would happen if there were no parks and green spaces in your country?', produced a range of thoughtful ideas. Responses covered everything from the negative impact on mental health to what would happen to animals and wildlife if there were no parks or green spaces.

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 deprived 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 learners 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.

Final comments

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.

