



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In English as a Second Language (4ES1) Paper E

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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 November 2024 series was another successful series for this unit. The 4ES1 03 paper once again 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 window.

Centres are to be commended for preparing their candidates so well. As always, the responses were a pleasure to listen to and 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 on the task card. Candidates have 1 minute of 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.

This series, as has been the case in previous series, the vast majority of candidates attempted all three parts of the examination. This was pleasing for examiners, particularly given the increasing level of difficulty and level of unfamiliarity of both the tasks and the questions as the exam progresses.

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. Centres should be commended for working so well with this system for submitting candidates' work.

For the November examination series, the speaking examinations may be completed from the beginning of October until the beginning of November. For the June examination series, the speaking examinations may be completed from mid-April up to, and including, the date of the last written examination 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. As has been the case in previous series, 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 before the end of this time, 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, which most candidates handled well.

Card 1: What you like to do when it is hot outside

This topic appeared to work well, with the vast majority of candidates able to talk about what they like to do when it is hot outside, and the questions proved to be accessible for candidates. Popular activities included going for a swim in the sea or in an outdoor swimming pool, sitting in the shade or going somewhere with air-conditioning. Many candidates talked about spending time with family and friends, often focusing on when it is hot during school holidays.

There was a range of answers in response to the final question, which was 'Is there anything you do not like to do when it is hot outside?' Many candidates talked about not taking part in physical activities, including sport.

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 and as seen in previous series, some interlocutors read the follow up prompts as a matter of course, without listening to what candidates had said.

Card 2: Going to the cinema

This was another accessible topic. It was interesting to hear candidates talk about a range of films and different genres that they have seen at the cinema. Many candidates talked in detail about a particular film, recalling the main events and describing the main characters. Some candidates did this without being prompted, whilst some could have benefitted by the interlocutor using the follow up prompt, 'Tell me about them'.

Most candidates were confidently able to talk about who they like going to the cinema with, typically family and friends, and there was an interesting range of responses in relation to the question focusing on what candidates like about going to the cinema. Responses included the large screen, the sound quality and the food and drink options.

Some candidates struggled with ideas for the last question: 'Is there anything that you do not like about going to the cinema?' However, in such instances, the majority of candidates were able to express that there is not anything that they do not enjoy about going to the cinema. For those candidates who did identify particular points, they included the cost of tickets and the limited availability of films they like.

Although it was not apparent that candidates struggled with the concept of going to a cinema, it is worth reminding candidates that the speaking test is an opportunity for them to demonstrate their productive skills. They should, therefore, 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: Where you would like to go on holiday in the future

This task card proved to be accessible to candidates, in a similar manner to the other tasks in Part 1. All candidates were able to identify a place they would like to go on holiday in the future, either in their home country or abroad. It was interesting to hear the range of places and the reasons for their choices.

The second question, 'What would you like to do there?', elicited a range of responses, varying from visiting specific tourist attractions to taking part in particular sporting activities. Candidates were also successful at talking about who they would like to go on holiday with, which was typically family or friends.

The last question, 'How would you get there?', also proved to work well, facilitating the opportunity for candidates to use different vocabulary and language structures to the other questions. For the top marks, candidates should demonstrate a secure ability to use a range of vocabulary and different language structures.

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 in 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 use of technology in school education

Candidates were often able to give detailed talks on this topic, using their own experiences of using technology in their own school education. Many candidates used the bullet points on the card to talk about how they use technology for their classwork and homework. A number of candidates also spoke about their experience of using technology to work together with their peers and teachers, either in school or at home, particularly during the covid-19 pandemic. It was also interesting to hear candidates talk about the range of opportunities technology provides for online learning.

As has been the case in previous series, 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 use of technology in school education but nevertheless used the bullet points as prompts throughout.

Less successful candidates used the ideas on the card to help them but did not always expand on the ideas they had chosen to talk about. Candidates tended to be able to list ideas, without providing further detail or precise examples of how technology is used in school education.

The topic proved to be accessible for candidates, with many candidates asked to stop at the end of the two minutes, having not reached the end of their talk; candidates evidently had lots to say.

Card 2: The benefits of students having a part-time job

This proved to be equally accessible to the other topics, with candidates often reflecting on part-time jobs they have had in the past or a part-time job they would like to have in the future. Many candidates also gave examples of relatives or friends who have had or have part-time jobs as students and were able to use their knowledge to talk about the benefits.

Some candidates did express the fact that they were not allowed to have a part-time job, either because of their parents/carers or because of laws and regulations in their home country. Nevertheless, these candidates were able to talk about what the benefits could be, and did not appear to be disadvantaged by having this as a topic to discuss.

Even the less successful candidates were able to express some straightforward ideas about the benefits of having a part-time job, despite some candidates perhaps running out of ideas about what to say. Nevertheless, candidates tended to have sufficient ideas to convey their understanding, even if some just focused on the personal benefits to students and not, perhaps, the wider benefits to society.

As has been the case with topics in previous series that ask candidates to focus on the benefits of a particular idea, a few candidates went off topic slightly talking about the disadvantages of students having a part-time job. However, some then weighed up the disadvantages with the benefits to reach an overall conclusion that part-time jobs for students are beneficial.

Card 3: The importance of having shops in your local area

This topic proved to work well, with many candidates able to draw on their own experiences of having shops in their local area, and, as a result, were then able to reflect on why they are important. Alternatively, if candidates do not have shops in their local area, they were able to talk about the issues they encounter as a result and, therefore, able to explain why it is important to have local shops.

Many candidates used the ideas on the card to develop ideas about the importance of having shops in their local area. It was also interesting to hear the many other reasons candidates explored, including the environmental impact of having to go further afield to shop and also the importance of promoting local businesses and products.

As with the other topics, 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. As is the case 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 automatically with the initial question.

As has been the case in previous series, 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 use of technology in school education

The vast majority of candidates tended to have plenty of ideas in relation to the first three questions for this topic. Candidates were able to talk about the technology they have in their school or college and the technology they would like to have. It was interesting to hear the very honest points candidates made in relation to the final question in the first set of three, which was, 'What are the disadvantages of using technology at school/college?' Many candidates admitted that they can spend too long using technology, often getting distracted from the task that they have been asked to complete.

There were interesting responses to the question about the age at which students should be allowed to use technology in school, with many candidates reflecting on the benefits for young children but also thinking about how technology got in the way of their own education. There were also many interesting responses to the question about how technology can help teachers, with many using examples of how teachers have marked their work remotely or delivered interactive lessons using technology.

Many candidates were able to respond to the final three questions in a successful manner. In particular, there were a number of thoughtful responses to the question about how technology might be used in schools/colleges in the future, with many candidates reflecting on how the increase in use could result in less face-to-face time with their teachers/careers, with lessons delivered by one teacher beamed to separate rooms in school/college. Candidates also gave some honest advice to students using technology in school/college, particularly the idea of restricting screen use and having a time limit.

Card 2: The benefits of students having a part-time job

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

When responding to the second triad of questions, many candidates gave an interesting response to the question about the age from which students should have a part-time job, with some arguing that education should be the priority whilst others advocated the skills and other advantages part-time jobs can provide alongside education.

The questions on more unfamiliar contexts enabled candidates to express abstract ideas, with many giving insightful answers to the question about whether students should not take jobs away from adults. In relation to the final question, 'What part-time jobs do you think students will have in the future?', many of the responses explored opportunities as a result of advancements in technology and being able to work from home on a part-time basis as a student.

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. Interlocutors should be reminded of the need to use the follow up prompts when candidates run out of ideas as a way of encouraging them to elaborate further on their responses.

Card 3: The importance of having shops in your local area

In part 3, 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 most of the questions. The first triad of questions, focusing on familiar contexts, worked well, with candidates able to talk about the shops they have in their local area and the modes of transport they use to get to them. The vast majority of candidates were also able to talk about what they do not like about the shops in their local area, with ideas tending to centre on the prices or the limited choice.

The second set of three questions also proved accessible. When responding to the question regarding why some people think it is better to shop online, many candidates built on what they dislike about the shops in their local area (the limited choice and higher prices compared to online). Candidates also had a range of ideas regarding the disadvantages of shopping online, which included having to wait to receive products and not being able to see products in person before buying them.

Even the less successful candidates were able to respond to the second set of questions in some detail, drawing on their own experiences of shopping online or the experiences of people they know.

As with the other topics, there were a number of particularly thoughtful responses to the final three questions on this card. Some candidates argued the need for intervention from either local

or national government, through tax breaks for example, in order to encourage people to shop locally. In response to the final question about how shopping will change in the future, many focused on the increasing popularity and use of drones, providing convenience but also, perhaps, the choice that is lacking when shopping locally.

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 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. Please ensure candidates have sufficient thinking time before repeating a question.
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 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 published on the Pearson website.
 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 for all candidates. It is recommended that the equipment, recording quality and 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 the final series for this qualification, which takes place in the summer of 2025.

