



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In English as a Second Language (4WES2_01R)

Unit 2: Listening

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Introduction

This report will provide tips and comments for 4WES2 01R (Listening, Regional) of the International GCSE 2023 specification in English as a Second Language.

This qualification consists of four units: Unit 1: Reading - 25% (examination); Unit 2: Listening - 25% (this examination), Unit 3: Writing - 25% (examination) and Unit 4 – Speaking – 25% (oral examination).

Unit 2 for Listening is assessed through an examination lasting 45 minutes. The total number of marks available is 50.

The recordings used relate to topics detailed in the specification *List of topics and subtopics*. The unit includes a range of recordings covering content taken from the compulsory subtopics in Topics 1–4. Recordings cover a broad range of extracts including information requests, explanations, opinions, monologues, dialogues and narration. The recordings will include a range of styles.

This focus of this component is:

AO2 – Listening – Understand and provide a response in English to a variety of types of spoken English language

The specification identifies that candidates must be able to listen to and understand:

1. spoken English language extracts and identify key information
2. informational broadcasts such as extracts from podcasts which may involve more than one speaker, and identify key details, opinions, and information conveyed
3. conversations which may be casual or in the form of interviews and identify key information the speakers are exchanging
4. extracts from public presentations on general interest topics, identifying facts and viewpoints, such as comparing the advantages and disadvantages of an idea or process
5. a wide range of grammatical forms and structures, as defined in the *Grammar list*
6. a wide range of relevant and appropriate vocabulary, as suggested in the *Core vocabulary list*.

The Listening unit assessment consists of **nine** recordings of increasing length and challenge. Some recordings are divided into two or more audio clips followed by examination questions.

Candidates hear each recording twice. They are given time to read the questions before each part of the recording begins and are expected to respond to the questions as they listen.

Recorded texts may be in the form of monologues, dialogues and occasionally there may be three speakers involved. Where there are two or three speakers, the identity of each speaker is clearly signposted. Recordings may be both informal and formal conversation styles, points of view, explanations, discussions, or simple topical conversations. Recordings and exam questions are contextualised.

The aim of the Listening examination is to assess understanding of spoken English language and provide an appropriate response in written English. A maximum of two different question types, for example multiple choice and gap-fill questions, are used per one recording playback (or if the recording is divided in two audio clips). Correct spelling is not a requirement as long as the response is comprehensible.

This was the first summer series of the Listening paper for the new English as a Second Language (2023) specification. It was clear that candidates were all able to respond to the recordings in the examination. They had been prepared well and had, at different levels, developed the skills required to answer the questions.

It was also clear that candidates used the skills developed in other units to support them in listening. As the specification identifies, the main aims for our candidates in this paper are:

- understand written and spoken English language in a range of practical, familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and for a variety of purposes
- communicate effectively in written and spoken English using a range of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures
- effectively use English language grammar, sentence structures, and vocabulary.

This qualification aims to provide candidates with the opportunity to explore and develop an understanding of the cultures and diverse communities where English is used around the world.

As Principal Examiner for this paper it was very pleasing to see that candidates had listened carefully, crafting and deleting responses as they listened, where required.

The responses of candidates had many positive features. Examiners were impressed by:

- evidence that many candidates had understood and engaged with the content of and ideas in the spoken extracts heard
- evidence that candidates were able to provide a response in English to the questions that required written answers
- accuracy of responses to multiple-choice questions
- evidence of completion of the questions across the paper.

Less successful responses:

- demonstrated a lack of awareness of the ideas in the spoken extracts that were specifically relevant to the question
- gave more generic, non-specific responses that did not demonstrate careful listening skills
- sometimes used written English in such a way that it made it impossible to see the quality of the answer. While spelling and grammatical accuracy are not a requirement, the response does need to make sense to the examiner marking it.

Recording 1 (transcript length 90–100 words)

Topic: Travel and tourism

Sub-topic: Tourist activities

The stimulus for this question was a short extract with a single speaker talking about activities on holiday. Candidates answered 1 multiple-choice question with 6 parts to achieve a maximum of 6 marks.

These questions were accurately answered in almost all cases with very few incorrect answers. In this first part of the paper, the level of this extract and question is A0/A1.

Recording 2 (split into a) and b), transcript length in total 100–120 words)

Topic: Education

Sub-topic: School life

The stimulus for this question was two short extracts with two speakers talking about ways to study effectively. Candidates answered 1 multiple-response question on the first extract for 3 marks and 1 multiple-response question on the second extract for 3 marks. Candidates needed to select 3 correct answers in both parts from a selection of 6.

These questions were accurately answered in the main with very few incorrect answers. In this early part of the paper, the level of this extract and question is A1.

Recording 3 (transcript length 130–140 words)

Topic: Travel and Tourism

Sub-topic: Travel and accommodation

The stimulus for this question was a short extract with two speakers talking about ordering food and drink in a hotel. Candidates answered 1 multiple-choice question with 5 parts, each worth 1 mark. A maximum of 5 marks were available.

These questions were accurately answered in almost all cases with very few incorrect answers, even though this was a longer single recording to be listened to. The level of the extract and question was A1.

Recording 4 (transcript length 50-60 words)

Topic: Travel and tourism

Sub-topic: Travel destinations and reasons for travelling

The stimulus for this question was a short extract with a single speaker talking about getting to a sports event. Candidates answered 1 multiple-response question for 3 marks, selecting 3 correct answers from a selection of 6.

This question was accurately answered in the main, although some candidates needed to take more care with listening to the content to differentiate incorrect responses from those that were correct. The level of the extract and question was A2, indicating some ramping up.

Recording 5 (transcript length 70–80 words)

Topic: Travel and tourism

Sub-topic: Travel destinations and reasons for travelling

The stimulus for this question was a short extract continuing on from the speech in recording 4. Candidates answered 1 open-response question with 3 parts, each worth 1 mark. Full sentences are not required. Candidates were mostly able to identify the idea of a taxi being used for part (a), but not all candidates were able to pick up on the specific detail of how the idea was to share the taxi. For part (b), some candidates did not answer specifically enough to achieve the mark. It was important to say she is going swimming first, or before the match – to just say ‘swimming’ was not focussed enough and did not demonstrate secure understanding. The majority of candidates were able to identify getting home by train for part (c).

The level of the extract and questions was A2, indicating some ramping up.

Recording 6 (transcript length 110–120 words)

Topic: Education

Sub-topic: Future education plans

The stimulus for this question was a presentation about courses for future study featuring two speakers. Candidates answered 1 multiple-choice question with 3 parts, each worth 1 mark. A maximum of 3 marks were available.

These questions were accurately answered in the main with very few incorrect answers, even though this was a longer single recording to be listened to and to select material from. Candidates that did not achieve a mark for a specific part had not distinguished clearly the distractors from the correct answer. The level of the extract and questions was A2.

Recording 7 (transcript length 60-70 words)

Topic: Education

Sub-topic: Future education plans

The stimulus for this question was a continuation of the talk about courses for future study featuring two speakers. Candidates answered 1 open-response question with 3 parts, each worth 1 mark. Full sentences are not required.

Candidates were able to identify in the main why Vanya wanted to do French, although the answer needed to be very specifically 'liked it at school'. Not all candidates were able to pick up on the specific detail of why Vanya changed course. Incorrect answers were not as accurate as they needed to be, for example 'no friends' is too generic to achieve a mark. For part (c), some candidates did not answer specifically enough to achieve the mark. The answer must include some qualifying reasoning for Vanya thinking ICT is useful, such as 'many skills for all different jobs'. The level of the extract and questions was A2.

Recording 8 (transcript length 190-200 words)

Topic: Myself and others

Sub-topic: Family, friends and relationships

The stimulus for this question was a two-speaker interaction about going to see a film with friends. Candidates answered 1 'complete the sentences' question worth 5 marks. For this item type candidates select their response by choosing (single/double word) options contained within a box / cloud. The responses complete a statement or statements.

These questions were accurately answered in the main with very few incorrect answers, even though this was a longer recording to be listened to and to select material from. Candidates who did not achieve a mark for a specific part had not taken time to listen to the whole recording and ensure that they were using the correct response in the correct place. The level of the extract and questions was B1.

Recording 9 (transcript length 210-220 words)

Topic: Education

Sub-topic: ICT

The stimulus for this question was a programme about technology and fitness featuring two speakers. Candidates answered 1 multiple-choice question with 6 parts, each worth 1 mark. A maximum of 6 marks were available.

These questions were accurately answered in the main with very few incorrect answers, even though this was a longer single recording to be listened to and to select material from. Candidates who did not achieve a mark for a specific part had not distinguished clearly the distractors from the correct answer and this seemed to be more the case in the later parts of the question which used information later in the recording. The level of the extract and questions was B1.

Recording 10 (transcript length 230–240 words)

Topic: Employment

Sub-topic: Future employment plans

The stimulus for this question was a conversation about working from home featuring two speakers. Candidates answered an open-response question which was part (a) with 4 parts, each worth 1 mark and then another open-response question which was part (b) worth 1 mark. A maximum of 5 marks were available.

These questions depended on candidates understanding positives and negatives, which they did, and also understanding which speaker they are answering about, requiring careful reading of the question. Candidates were able to identify what the positives and negatives of working from home according to Devin were, although, as with other open-response questions, it cannot be an answer that comes from own contextual knowledge. The majority of candidates were able to identify not meeting people / not making friends and technology / technical issues as negatives. Candidates were able to identify a positive from what Charu said, whereas the negative was sometimes not specific enough, especially when mentioning that communication / messages may not be clear. Answers such as 'not very clear' was not clear enough to achieve a mark.

The final part was answered well, with the vast majority identifying saving costs / lowering costs / reducing costs. The level of the extract and questions was B1.

Recording 11 (transcript length 280–290 words)

Topic: Myself and others

Sub-topic: Hobbie and leisure time

The stimulus for this question was a single-speaker presentation about sketching as a hobby. Candidates answered an open-response question which had 5 parts, each worth 1 mark. A maximum of 5 marks were available. This question had more blank responses than other questions, possibly due to its higher level of cognitive demand and the length of the recording.

These questions relied on candidates not just trying to answer from their own knowledge of sketching, but listening to the recording and answering the question given based on the material. For example, many candidates said 'quick and loose lines' for part (a), which was not focussed enough for the mark – it was specifically drawing using quick and loose lines. Part (b) tended to be accurately answered, although there needed to be something that qualified the answer such as 'sees the world in new ways', 'make a stronger connection with the world' to tie to the 'changed the way' in the question. Part (c) needed specific reference to how it fitted into daily routine and why it was useful when travelling ('travels a lot of work' did not tie the response into understanding why sketching was a hobby that suits the lifestyle. Part (d) was often misunderstood, with some candidates giving answers of other things that were needed, answering the first part 'What is essential' rather than reading the full question. The final part was generally answered accurately. The level of the extract and questions was B2.

Summary

Based on their performance on the paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- make sure you listen to a wide range of different types of texts to make you more familiar with a wide range of topics
- review the sample assessment materials to look at the style of the paper and the types of questions
- make good use of the time before the recordings start to read the questions, to check who you are being asked about, to think about possible answers and consider the context and topic
- follow the instructions carefully when answering the questions, including using the correct space for the response and not writing too much when a question is worth 1 mark only
- think about the spelling of words when writing answers and think about the sentence construction if you write a sentence
- answer the questions with the information in recording you have heard, rather than giving an answer from your general knowledge.

