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GCSE

**BENGALI**

8638/SF: Speaking Foundation  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

The overall performance of this year was very good and students responded very well to the demands of the examination. Also, most of students coped very well in general with all aspects of the examination.

In the last two years, the speaking test was completed through teacher assessment in the centre. So this was the second time the board held the exam with new specification.

Even after two years, the students' efforts seem to be improving the quality of the exam.

The standard of students' work varied enormously, but even the less able students were able to communicate something over the three parts of the exam.

Unfortunately some teacher-examiners occasionally omitted the second part of two part questions in both the Role-plays and Photo cards which impacted on student marks. Questions were not asked in line with the teacher script provided and again this resulted in some students not scoring as highly as they would have done.

Recordings were generally clear. There was no problem with the quality of the recording this year. Most students were able to perform very well. They were evidently well prepared and worked hard. Most were able to answer with confidence and use correct and accurate language to communicate their answer. Pronunciation and grammar were also up to a good standard and students were confident in their use of different tenses where necessary. Many students were awarded full marks.

It was also important for the teacher-examiner to be aware that the aim of this examination is to allow the students to demonstrate their Bengali speaking abilities. Some of the teacher-examiners used the Sylheti dialect without reading the question properly, and so hindered the responses of students.

Occasionally, teacher-examiners did not follow the requirements of the test laid down in the Instructions for the conduct of the exams, available on the AQA website. For example, they did not adhere to the teacher script or adapted questions to make them easier for the students. Those teacher-examiners that are not school teachers or are unfamiliar with the specification and the requirements of the speaking test examination process should read the instructions for the conduct of the exams mentioned above well in advance of conducting tests.

Any questions should be directed to AQA using the MFL mailbox [mfl@aqa.org.uk](mailto:mfl@aqa.org.uk).

This will ensure that students have the opportunity to obtain the results they deserve.

Examiners are encouraged to use a Speaking Scoresheet in order to arrive at fair and consistent marks for all students. A copy of this can be found at the back of the mark scheme.

## Role-plays

In the role-plays, the prescribed role in the Teacher’s booklet was adhered to by most teachers. Sometimes, teacher-examiners re-worded the script and any subsequent responses by the student was invalidated. Particularly in the Foundation Tier, the students responded very well in the Role-plays. However, very few of the students were unsure about some of the role-play tasks.

### Role-play 1

#### Task a

The question was “মোবাইল ফোন তুমি সাধারণত কী করো?” The students understood the question and answered well.

#### Task b

This unprepared task was done well, with the majority understanding the question: “দিনে কতটা সময় তুমি মোবাইল ফোন কাটাও?”

#### Task c

This question were “মোবাইল ফোন কীভাবে পড়াশুনার ক্ষতি করছে?” The students understood this question and answered well.

#### Task d

“সবসময় মোবাইল ফোন সাথে রাখার সুবিধা কী?” This was done well.

#### Task e

Students should ask any questions about mobile phones. Students' roles were: “বন্ধুর মোবাইল ফোন” Because of the word বন্ধুর here, many people ask about the phone of the teacher-examiner's friend while asking the question, which makes the level of the question quite difficult for this tier.

### Role-play 2

#### Task a

This was done well.

#### Task b

It was pleasing to see that most students understood “মেলা” and were able to say that he/she wants to buy some food from Mela.

#### Task c

This was done well.

#### Task d

Those who have been allowed to ask a question have correctly asked a question about the cost of food. Some of the teacher-examiners did not allow the student to ask a question after task c and went directly to task e.

#### Task e

This was done well.

### **Role-play 3**

#### **Task a**

This was done very well.

#### **Task b**

Students often found this question task difficult. Some of the teacher-examiners did not allow the student to ask a question after task a and went directly to task c.

#### **Task c**

This was also done very well.

#### **Task d**

This was also done well.

#### **Task e**

This was done well by the majority of students.

### **Role-play 4**

#### **Task a**

The word “প্রতিবেশী” was difficult to understand for very few students but most of the students answered well.

#### **Task b**

This was done well.

#### **Task c**

This was done well.

#### **Task d**

This was done well.

#### **Task e**

Many students did not mention the word “পাশের বাড়ি” while asking questions. The majority asked a very simple question “তোমার প্রতিবেশী কেমন?” but achieved two marks.

### **Role-play 5**

#### **Task a**

This was done well.

#### **Task b**

This was an opinion-giving task, most students gave a clear opinion about their school canteen.

#### **Task c**

This was an unprepared task, which was done well.

**Task d**

This was done well

**Task e**

This was very mixed as far as quality of responses went, but the usual successful attempts were along the lines of “তোমার স্কুলে কী কী সুবিধা আছে?”

**Role-play 6**

**Task a**

This was done well.

**Task b**

This was done very well.

**Task c**

This task asked for an opinion, and was done well by the majority of students.

**Task d**

This proved quite challenging for some students because of the words “আয়”

**Task e**

In this task the student will ask questions, which was done well by the majority, although the word “হাতখরচ” was not well known.

**Photo cards**

The two minute maximum time for the photo cards was adhered to appropriately for the most part. In some cases, the allotted time passed for students that were unable to answer the questions, and hence went over the time.

Most teacher-examiners read the questions appropriately for the students. However, some teacher-examiners manipulated and added to the questions asked, resulting in the students being unable to provide responses of the expected topic. Also, some teacher-examiners missed out questions by mistake, therefore resulting in students losing marks.

In order to score in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop at least three answers by providing lots of detail. To secure the top band, some description was required in their responses, with opinions and justification. Many students were able to do this.

For higher bands, students needed to respond in Standard Bengali, instead of different dialects of Bengali (eg, Sylheti). Most students attempted to respond in Standard Bengali.

The first question was always “ছবিতে কী কী দেখছো?” and students generally described the people in it and/or what they were doing.

Other questions encouraged a variety of responses from students, with a wide range of quality in responses. Some questions proved to be more difficult than others.

The following questions are those that students struggled with the most.

**Photo card A**

“উপহার পেলে তোমার কেমন লাগে?”

Although this was a question which students could prepare for, it was not answered well overall. However, some did answer well by saying things such as “উপহার পেলে আমার ভালোই লাগে।” But then this task did not last longer. The teacher-examiners moves on to the next question.

**Photo card B**

“অবসর সময় তোমার পরিবারের অন্যরা কে কী করেন?”

Some of the students did not understand this question and because the word অন্যরা. The answer should be in none first person but some of students answered in the first person.

**Photo card C**

One of the prepared questions is always designed to elicit an answer referring to an event in the past or future. This one proved to be particularly difficult and many answers were in the present tense.

**Photo card E**

“গতবছর তোমার স্কুল লাইব্রেরীতে কী কী করা হয়েছিল?”

Some of the students did not understand this question and because of this, some teachers changed the question differently. This proved to be difficult for students to answer.

**General conversation**

For the Foundation Tier General Conversation, students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. The timing of the conversation at Foundation tier is between three and five minutes. However, in some cases, the maximum time passed for students that were unable to answer the questions, and so went over the time. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme.

Pronunciation was often weak and also affected the degree of effective communication. Most of the teachers read the example question in the teachers’ booklet. This was not necessary. A small number of teachers did not read the questions properly and changed the meaning of the words. As a result, the students’ responses were not in line with the expected answers.

When moving from one theme to another, most teachers did as requested and referred to the change of theme on the recording. The best way to do this was, at the beginning of the conversation, to announce: এখন তোমার পছন্দের থিম ----- নিয়ে আমরা কথা বলবো। and then, when the change of theme was about to happen: তোমার পছন্দের থিম \_\_\_\_ শেষ হলো এখন কথা বলবো থিম ---- নিয়ে।

This was useful for the student and also for the examiner, who had to make a note of the time spent on each theme.

Another aspect of the General Conversation is the need for the student to ask a question to the teacher-examiner. If the student did not ask the teacher a question, the teacher is allowed to prompt the student to ask a question by saying আমাকে কিছু জিজ্ঞেস করবে? Most teachers did this, but others did not.

Some students were able to deliver a well-structured fluent performance using some rehearsed responses. However, there was a lack of ability to interact spontaneously for some students, meaning that the top mark of 5 in the category of Spontaneity and Fluency could not be awarded to this level of performance.



## Advice to teachers

### General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students should not have access to their mobile during the preparation time or during the exam, in accordance with examination regulations.
- In the Instructions document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student:  
GCSE Bengali examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number \_\_\_\_, student number \_\_\_\_, student name \_\_\_\_. Role-play number \_\_\_\_, photo card letter \_\_\_\_, general conversation theme chosen by student Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Use Bengali throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her roleplay and photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the general conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible.

### Role-play

- Keep to your script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in an unprepared task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so in the unprepared task almost invariably leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

### Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the two-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

**General conversation**

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful in discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Bengali: এবার আমরা কথা বলবো তোমার পছন্দের থিম ---- নিয়ে।
- Keep a close eye on the time.
- The maximum length of the general conversation is five minutes. Everything after that will *not* be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they don't do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you don't forget to do it later on.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

**Advice to students**

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three questions on the photo card.
- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card and to all questions in the general conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words such as কী, কবে, কোথায়, কে, কেন, কখন।
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Bengali. You can say প্রশ্নটা আবার বলবেন কি? for example.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.