



GCSE

BENGALI

8638/SH: Speaking Higher
Report on the Examination

8638
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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.

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.

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Role-plays

The role-plays at Higher tier were clearly more challenging than those at Foundation. Most students did well in this part of the test. One of the tasks in each role-play elicited a response which referred to a past or future event.

The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero mark per task.

The mark for Knowledge and use of language usually corresponded with the mark for Communication.

Role-play 7

Task a

Overall this was done well. Most of the student's answers to the question “বিয়ের অনুষ্ঠানে যেতে তোমার কেমন লাগে ও কেন?” were inadequate as they missed to discuss কেন and miss one mark.

Task b

The main problem with this unprepared task, which had two questions, was that Teacher Examiners often asked both questions together. The first part of the question everybody answered well, but some students then did not go to the second part. Some Teacher Examiners prompted “আর কী করেছে?” which led the student to answer the whole question.

Task c

This was done well overall. Most of the student's ask a question about wedding food like “বিয়ের খাবার তোমার কেমন লাগে?”

Task d

Most of the students did well,

Task e

Most of the students did well, but some students couldn't understand “জীবনসঙ্গী” so few of the Teacher Examiners rephrased the question, for example “সঙ্গী হিসাবে তোমার কেমন মানুষ পছন্দ?”

Role-play 8

Task a

তোমার প্রিয় ফিল্মের নাম কী আর এটা কোন ধরনের ফিল্ম? The task was about two elements - ফিল্মের নাম and কোন ধরনের ফিল্ম. Majority of the students answered well.

Task b

Students were familiar with asking a question about why is this film favourite and most students answered this correctly.

Task c

ফিল্মটা তুমি কবে এবং কার সঙ্গে দেখেছো? For this unpredictable task, two things were required and a small number of students lose one mark by not answering the second part of the question.

Task d

This was done very well.

Task e

ইন্টারনেটে ছায়াছবি দেখার ব্যাপারে তোমার কী মতামত? This was done also very well.

Role-play 9

Task a

কী ধরনের আবহাওয়া তোমার পছন্দ এবং কেন? This task was done well.

Task b

This unpredictable task was done also very well.

Task c

The question required **two** details about what he she did last winter. Most of them did well but some of the students only mentioned one detail, therefore was only partially answered and so scored one.

Task d

This task involved asking a question about rainy session in Bangladesh. This was done well.

Task e

This was done also very well.

Role-play 10

Task a

আপনারা কী খাবার বিক্রি করছেন এবং কেন? This was done well. In response to this question, some people have said a lot of unnecessary things, which were just a waste of time.

Task b

“এই টাকাটা আপনারা কীভাবে চ্যারিটির কাজে লাগাবেন?” This was done well with different type answers and achieved two marks.

Task c

The question required **two** details about how to help the charity a part from buying food. Some students only said “টাকা দিতে পারেন ধর্ফ আমাদের সাথে কাজ করতে পারেন।” which was credited correctly.

Task d

The majority asked a very simple question “আপনার কি চ্যারিটির অভিজ্ঞতা আছে?” but achieved two marks.

Task e

This was done also very well.

Role-play 11

Task a

This was done well. Some students only said the name of work and why they want a job, which was credited.

Task b

This was done well.

Task c

This was done also well.

Task d

This was done well overall.

Task e

The question required **two** details about how he/she will manage working as well as his her school work and this was done well.

Role-play 12

Task a

Most students answered this task well by giving personal views about learning Bengali at school and why.

Task b

This was done well.

Task c

Students scored highly on this task, predominantly giving two details about future benefits of learning Bengali, such as “অনেক কাজ পেতে সাহায্য হয়, বাংলাদেশে সকলের সাথে ভালো যোগাযোগ রাখায়।”

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

This was done also well.

Photo cards

For this section a maximum of three minutes was available. The only students who went over time were those who had considerable hesitation during their replies. Sometimes the re-wording of a question by the teacher did not retain the same meaning as the one in the Teacher’s Booklet, and therefore any answer given by the student had to be discounted. Also, some teachers missed out questions by mistake, therefore resulting in students losing marks.

For higher bands, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop a minimum of three answers by using several clauses. To secure the top band, some description was required in their responses, with opinions and justification. Many students were able to do this.

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

Photo card G

“তোমার বন্ধুরা কীভাবে তোমার জন্মদিন পালন করে?” Some students found it hard because they used first person, instead of second/third person. “আমার জন্মদিনে আমরা বন্ধুরা মাইল বাইরে খেতে যাই।”

Photo card H

“সোশ্যাল মিডিয়ার মাধ্যমে বন্ধুত্বের কী সুবিধা ও অসুবিধা?” Some students found it hard to describe “সুবিধা ও অসুবিধা?”

Photo card I

“তোমার বন্ধুরা কীভাবে শরীরের যত্ন নেয় সে সম্পর্কে আলোচনা করো।” Those students who understood “যত্ন” answered this question well.

Photo card J

“উড়োজাহাজে ভ্রমণ সম্পর্কে তোমার কী মতামত? কেন বুঝিয়ে বলো।”

Some students could not answer this question well because they did not understand

“উড়োজাহাজে”

General conversation

The questions used in the General Conversation ranged widely. Students could nominate a theme in advance to discuss first in the conversation. Most students attempted a wider variety of language structures and vocabulary. The standard of pronunciation was consistently good and most tried to use Standard Bengali in the General Conversation. Many were able to use three tenses, give their opinions and also asked a question.

In this section, most of the teachers used the suggested question in the teachers' booklet. This was not necessary. Some teachers simplified the question too much and as a result students gave Yes/No answers rather than developing their responses.

Timings were usually good. The timing of the conversation at Higher tier is between five and seven minutes. Unfortunately, some of the teacher-examiners only used one theme in the general conversation and consequently students lost half of the marks for Communication. In this part of the test, some teacher-examiners used the old specification and asked for a presentation and discussion, which is not part of this specification.

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 new aspect of the General Conversation is the need for the student to ask a question of 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? Some teachers did this, however, others did not, which resulted in students losing marks.

The standard of pronunciation was consistently good. For Range and Accuracy of language, students had to make a reference to past, present and future events. A few of the teacher-examiners did not give students the opportunity to respond in different tenses, meaning some students did not elicit references to the past, present and future

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.