
GCSE

POLISH

8688/SH: Speaking (Higher)
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Overall the exam went well and the results are comparable to the ones from three years ago. As might be expected, there was a range in the level of performance in these tests, ranging from students who performed excellently to those who found some aspects challenging.

For Higher tier, 60.73% (3529 out of 5811) of students scored between 50-60 marks; 73.12% (4249 out of 5811) between 40-60 marks.

The conduct of tests by teacher-examiners in many cases was not in line with the Instructions for the conduct of the exams and there was still a large number of centres, compared to 2019, where the conduct of the tests prevented students from obtaining the grade they deserved. It is important for teacher-examiners to read the advice sections at the end of this report and incorporate the advice into their own testing for future series.

The following comments aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the 2022 GCSE Polish Speaking Test, both in terms of teacher conduct and student performance.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests, to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. Feedback is provided on the basis of need only and not for every teacher-examiner.

Tier of Entry

The vast majority of students appeared to be entered at the correct tier. Generally, their command of Polish was very good or even excellent. There were some weaker students at Higher tier though, who were unable to cope with some elements of this test; in particular, they struggled with the Role Play or certain questions on Photo Cards.

Quality of Recording

In the case of such a test, it is imperative that schools provide a suitable venue and use a high-quality recording device. Although this was usually the case, there were some instances where external background noise and/or poor-quality recordings affected the audibility of what the students said. There were also partial recordings.

Teacher Conduct

Test Routine Procedures

It is good to note that many teachers conducted the tests in a highly professional way, strictly following the guidelines set out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. This allowed for efficient testing, something which puts the student at ease and helps the marker at a later stage.

The vast majority of teachers followed the prescribed combination of Role Play, Photo Cards and General Conversation in the sequencing chart. Unfortunately, there were a few instances of using the wrong combination, which resulted in a duplication of the theme of Photo Cards in the General Conversation. In such cases, the maximum possible score for Communication that can be given is five out of a possible ten.

Unfortunately, there were still quite a few teachers who did not follow the speaking test procedures as stipulated in the *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*. First of all, the introduction to each new candidate must include the number of the Role Play, Photo Card letter and nominated theme of General Conversation. After the test has started, procedural issues should be briefly announced in the target language, e.g. *Scenka numer jedenaście*. It is also essential to announce the topic change during the General Conversation.

In order to obtain good grades for students, it is important that teacher-examiners become more thoroughly familiar with the specification. There were cases, due to the irregularities in conducting the exam, where students ended up with low marks than they deserved.

Timings

Most students completed the Photo Card task conveniently within the time limit at both tiers. At the Higher tier, where the time limit is three minutes, there were some cases in which all five questions were not asked within the allotted time limit. Occasionally this was due to the student's very slow delivery, but more often the result of overly long and repetitive responses to the first three questions, especially the question eliciting a description of the photo. There were also cases where teacher-examiners were asking unnecessary supplementary follow-up questions in-between.

At both tiers, many General Conversations adhered to the minimum and maximum timings. On the other hand, there were some centres that had problems with the timing of this part of the exam. As a result, one of the themes in General Conversation, and sometimes even both, was/were too short and did not meet the minimum time requirement. This had an impact on the mark awarded for Communication; there was a reduction by two marks. Teacher-examiners are advised to ensure that the time is evenly distributed between the two themes, and note that the time of the second theme of the General Conversation begins immediately after the first question on that theme is asked. All time used up to this point is allocated to coverage of the first theme. Schools are also reminded that anything said by the student beyond the time limit is disregarded for assessment purposes.

Conducting the Role Play Task

In the Role Play, most teachers followed the role prescribed in the Teacher's booklet. There were cases where teachers re-worded the script and any subsequent student responses were invalidated. Schools are reminded that the target language phrases provided can only be changed if the student's response renders them inappropriate. Some examiners also asked questions which were not in the script, asked the tasks in the wrong order or even omitted some of them. That left students confused. In some of the Role Plays, if a student answers a question completely but incorrectly, the mark given is zero, even if the teacher then repeats the question and a correct answer ensues. Some teachers pursued a correct answer in this way and at times it seemed to affect the student's confidence. However, when a teacher recognised that the student was starting to give the wrong answer and interjected by repeating the question, any subsequent correct answer was rewarded.

In the case of two-part questions, which often require opinion and justification, it is good practice to

distinguish these two elements separately. This was not done enough by teachers across the tiers.

Also, many teachers prompted students to ask them the question, but, unfortunately, a few examiners suggested key words at the same time, and students therefore lost their credits in the Question Task...and some just omitted this task.

Conducting the Photo Card Task

There were some occasions that an entire question was paraphrased in an acceptable way. For example, *Jakie są zalety i wady pracy wolontaryjnej?* was replaced with *Jakie są plusy i minusy pracy charytatywnej?* In addition, there were many cases of instances of paraphrasing attempts that did not retain the exact original meaning of the question, and therefore invalidated any subsequent student's response. Quite often, some teachers introduced their own questions or added supplementary ones. As a result, students did not receive credit. In the Teacher's Booklet, it states: *No supplementary questions must be asked.* Despite this clear instruction, a surprising number of additional questions appeared at both tiers. All the students' responses to such questions were not taken into account for the assessment and simply served to reduce the amount of time available for the student to answer the prescribed questions as fully as possible. There were also instances in which teachers asked only three questions instead of five.

Schools are reminded that repetition of the question is allowed and that the original question can be rephrased in the second asking; however, the full question still needs to be asked while it retains its original meaning. In addition, the question should not be repeated if the student has given a complete answer. In such cases, the student's answer to the repeated question is disregarded for assessment.

Some teachers interrupted students in developing their answers, and the timing of this part of the test revealed that it would be possible to further develop student responses within the allotted time.

As in the Role Plays, some teachers did not split two-part unseen questions, whilst others omitted to ask the second part.

Conducting the General Conversation

In some schools, teachers asked about only one theme in conversation or duplicated the theme from the Photo Card in General Conversation, which had a huge impact on awarded marks for Communication. For some students, there was a disproportion in the time devoted to the two Themes.

The style of questioning for less able students did not always allow them to perform to their full potential. Most examiners followed the questions suggested only, without consideration of the ability of a particular student. Many teachers used the same questions for each student, without using supplementary questions or requesting further clarification from the student. There were also teachers using closed questions that have very limited usefulness, as they don't allow students to show their skills and knowledge.

In order to give the student the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to respond spontaneously, teachers must intervene and follow what has been said by seeking further detail, clarification, opinions. For lower ability students, simple queries or requests for further detail may be appropriate. There were instances when teachers asked a question that students had already discussed earlier in their responses.

Another important aspect of the General Conversation is the need to ask a question by the student. Most students either asked the question at a time of their choice, or it was elicited by the teacher at the end of the test. Unfortunately, this led to some questions not being asked within the maximum time limit and therefore a one-mark penalty being applied to the mark for Communication as outlined in the mark scheme. Teachers should encourage students to accomplish this routine task early in the Conversation to ensure it does not go beyond the time allowed. Teachers should also remember that they are allowed to prompt the student to ask them a question by saying, e.g. *Masz jakieś pytanie?* or *Czy chciałbyś/chciałabyś mnie o coś spytać?* Some teachers did it well, even though the students declared *Nie* at the first instance, but other examiners did not.

At both tiers, questions were consistently asked that allowed all students to give and explain opinions, necessary to gain access to the highest band for Communication. At Higher tier, the vast majority of students were given the opportunity to use all three time frames, thereby gaining access to the 9-10 band for Range and Accuracy. There were isolated cases, however, when students did not get/use opportunities to use different time frames, which prevented them from accessing higher than the 1-2 band.

Student Performance

Student Performance in the Role Play Task

A significant number of students at both tiers did not pay sufficient attention to the context laid out in both English and Polish on their Role Play card and this could account for some inaccurate or irrelevant responses, or they did not establish clearly in their mind (from the scene-setting statement) between whom the Role Play was taking place, e.g. between two students or between the teacher and the student. Teachers are advised to ensure that they read the scenario introduction at the start of the Role Play, as well as reminding students about the importance of carefully reading it in their preparation time.

The biggest challenge for students in this section of the test was dealing with interrogatives. If their understanding of these was poor, students struggled to formulate a question where required. Some of the students, who were able to effectively ask the question from the prompt words provided on the ? task, lost their marks for using an inadequate form of address. They mainly had difficulties in addressing the teacher as *Pan/Pani* in formal Role Plays. That had a significant impact on marks awarded for KUL (Knowledge and use of Language). There were occasions when students asked a totally random question, sometimes relating to the previous task, but not linked to the given cue.

In addition, some students missed certain details in the prompts and then used information they knew on a topic which did not fit the scenario. For example, some students gave an opinion when this was not part of the task on the card. In the question task, less able students sometimes asked a question which was totally unrelated to the prompt or simply read the prompt aloud which could not be credited.

On occasions, and at both tiers, students gave far more information than was necessary to accomplish the task, which should be discouraged. At Higher tier some students offered reasons for their opinions where they were not required (the fifth task in Role Play 9 and Role Play 12).

At both tiers, the majority of students were able to respond appropriately to the unpredictable task, which proved their ability to deal with language in a spontaneous way.

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

In Role Plays, the following tasks generally caused the most problems for students:

Role Play 7

In the first task (*Nowy tablet - model i cena*), some students were asking a question about the price, rather than saying how much they are willing to spend (not paying attention to the introduction text). Failure to give two details in the first task also led some other students to only being awarded one mark.

Role Play 8

Lots of students for Question 1, asked in the past tense, answered in the present tense, e.g. *Ja zwykle spędzam Święta Bożego Narodzenia z rodziną w Polsce*. In some cases it was the examiner's fault for reading the question in the wrong tense. Some students also dropped their marks for giving only one detail instead of two. Many students were unable to phrase a question correctly in the Question task *Ulubiona uroczystość*. Students tended to ask about New Year's Eve instead as it was related to the previous task.

Role Play 9

Some students dropped their marks through giving only one detail in the first task (*Bilet – dokąd i na kiedy*) or the second task - many of the students only gave one type of ticket they wanted to buy; they failed to recognise the plural form within the prompt words (*Rodzaj biletu – dwa szczegóły*). Many students had difficulty producing a valid question (*Peron – który*).

Role Play 10

Some students dropped marks by giving only one detail in the first task (*Problemy ekologiczne w mieście – dwa rodzaje*). Some of them were talking about global issues instead, eg *topnienie lodowców, plastik w oceanie*. In the fourth task most of the students answered about how to save water (turn off the tap, turn the shower off), instead of saving electricity – they were surprised by this unexpected task. This was by far the most misunderstood task grammatically – students tended to give answers in the present tense instead of the past tense, e.g. *Ostatnio wyłączam komputer / światło w domu*.

Role Play 11

Some students were unable to respond to the second task. In some cases it was again the teacher's mistake in reading the question wrongly: *O której wychodzisz ze szkoły?* instead of *O której wychodzisz do szkoły?* In the third task (*Co sądzisz o lekcjach języka obcego w Twojej szkole?*) many students gave an opinion on the importance of learning foreign languages, not on lessons (but it was added to the mark scheme to reflect this tendency). Some students found it difficult to ask the question about school in Poland; some of them were asking questions about school in general, not specifically in Poland.

Student Performance in the Photo Card Task

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Most students gave a reasonably well-developed response to the first prepared question *Co widzisz na fotografii?* Their replies were reinforced when the students used a set of phrases that can be used to describe any places, such as *Na tym zdjęciu widzę...*, *Na fotografii znajduje się...* On regular occasions, the effect of the

second structure was undermined by the anglicised version *W tej fotografii...*

While development of responses is to be welcomed, students must ensure that what they say still applies to the question of what can be seen in the photo. It is perfectly acceptable to express a personal opinion on a given aspect of the photo, eg *Studenci są szczęśliwi, bo wszyscy się uśmiechają*.

In order to score in the top band, students had to clearly answer all questions and develop at least three answers by using several clauses. Failure to develop responses in some cases prevented some students from getting high marks. Understandably, the answers to the three questions prepared were usually more developed than those to the two unseen questions.

Questions discriminated well, with a wide range of quality in the answers. The Photo Cards that students found the most challenging were Photo Card H about free-time activities, Photo Card I on the subtheme of social issues, and Photo Card L about jobs, career choices and ambitions. Such tasks present some linguistic and conceptual challenges. However, teachers must be aware that the identity and culture, local, national, international and global areas of interest and current and future study and employment are key areas of learning in this specification, and students must be prepared to encounter them in the speaking test.

Aside from this, common issues were:

Photo Card G

Some students missed the marks through not eliciting both details in the fifth task and mentioning only advantages or disadvantages of organising weddings (some talked about weddings instead). In general, many students did not seem to understand the difference between *zalety* and *wady* or the meaning of these two words at all (showing a lack of preparation for the exam).

Photo Card H

Similarly to the previous Card, many students gave only advantages or disadvantages in the fourth task. Of particular difficulty was this task and the second one, because the phrases *sporty zespołowe* and *zawodowy sportowiec* were sometimes unknown.

Photo Card I

Problems with understanding *zalety* and *wady* again. The phrases *praca wolontaryjna* and *akcje charytatywne* were quite often unknown. Some students also did not know what *problemy społeczne* are and were giving examples of ecological problems instead of social ones.

Photo Card J

In some cases, they listed only advantages or only disadvantages of living in the mountains.

Photo Card K

Some students found it difficult to respond to the second question, because they mistook the concept of *przedmiot w szkole*. In the fourth question, students quite often missed the part *gdzie*. Like in previous Cards they struggled with advantages and disadvantages.

Photo Card L

In the second question the word *weterynarz* was the most challenging word for most of the students. Targeting at having their own company and the school role in preparation for adulthood proved conceptually difficult for many students.

The Higher Tier General Conversation

For most students, the Conversation element of the test was where they performed best. On the other hand, there were schools in which the exam was not conducted in line with the Instructions of the conduct of the exam and, as a result, the students continued to give a short presentation at the beginning of this part of the exam.

Overall, the students managed to keep the conversation going for the minimum amount of time across two themes. Most students tried to develop their responses, especially to the prepared questions on the nominated theme. Students often gave and explained opinions in addition to basic information.

Many students used complex structures and vocabulary, which gave them access to the top marks for Language and Accuracy. Overall, students' vocabulary was mostly good, sometimes excellent, but some colloquial words were used, which were not appropriate during the formal exam and reflect the process of learning Polish language from hearing by students, eg *matma*, *ciuchy*, *fajny*. The verb *to go* was overused, e.g. *jechać samolotem*, *szłem na wakacje*, *szedłem do Polski*.

There were lots of English words conjugated in Polish, resulting in incorrect forms like *polucja*, *juniform*, *juniversity*, or direct translations, like *iść do uniwersytetu* (instead of *na uniwersytet*), *mamy klasy* (in place of *lekcje*). English influence is obvious in collocations, like *spędzać* (in a meaning of *wydawać pieniądze*). The most common influence was visible though in the usage of the noun *student* in place of *uczeń* or the verb *studiować* instead of *uczyć się*, or some words (mainly connected with the school life and education) used in their English form; most commonly *Sixth Form*, *Science*, *Art*, *level*, *GCSE*.

There were also students with more limited vocabulary and their language was sometimes repetitive and conveyed only basic information. These students often mixed different time frames, noun cases and verbs' endings.

Finally, in some cases there were some noticeable problems with language accuracy – Polish sentence structure becomes an issue, and some unnatural word combinations or word order are common, which are direct copies from English.

Some students demonstrated the ability to incorporate a greater range of structure, including modal verbs and common subordinating conjunctions. However, in some cases, the potential mark for both Communication and Range and Accuracy of Language was lowered significantly by the frequency of serious errors that impeded intended meanings.

The pronunciation and intonation were usually very good or excellent and the students received the highest marks for Pronunciation. Only in sporadic cases was there little intonation, which was the effect of the influence of the English language on Polish.

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.
- The *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations* document is available via the AQA website.
- 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 candidate: GCSE Polish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, candidate number ____, candidate name ____. Role Play number ____, Photo Card letter ____, General Conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Use Polish throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her Role Play 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 zero 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 zero 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.

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. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesujące* or *nudne* and there are other ways to say *lubię to*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *zabawne*, *niesamowite*, *wspaniałe*, *świetne*, *nieprzyjemne*; and verbs such as *uwielbiam*, *interesuję się*,

znajduję to, nienawidzę tego, to mnie niepokoi.

- 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 discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, e.g. 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 Polish: *Przejdźmy teraz do tematu rozmowy numer jeden* etc.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- 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.
- 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, using a verb in each one.
- 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.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Polish. You can say *Proszę powtórzyć*, 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.