



GCSE

BENGALI

8638/SF Paper 2 Speaking Foundation Tier
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

There was a wide range in the standard of work produced by students and their performance was generally good but there were some aspects which were not as well done as they had been in the previous exam series. Great credit for this goes to the students themselves and also to the hard work and skills of their teacher-examiners.

Pleasingly, some lower attaining students at Foundation tier were able to communicate some information for all three parts of the test. However, in some cases, teacher-examiners omitted part of the task in some of the Role-plays and in the Photo card and on occasion, asked supplementary questions which were not part of the AQA materials. This resulted in lower marks being scored by some students.

The quality of recordings in this series was generally clear except for a small number of tests. Schools/colleges should, however, be aware that it is essential that the speaking test is conducted at a suitable venue and that a quality recording device is used. Although this was usually the case, there were some instances where external background noise and/or poor quality recordings affected the audibility of the recordings, all of which made marking a very difficult exercise for examiners. In a minority of cases, there was a lot of background noise, all of which made it extremely difficult for the examiners to work out what the students were saying. Teachers are also reminded that they should not stop or pause the recording at any time during the test.

There were also some issues with labelling of documentation which impacted on the work of examiners. Teacher-examiners are strongly advised to ensure that all documentation is provided as outlined in the *Instructions for the conduct of the exams* on the AQA website.

The majority of students performed very well. They had been well prepared by their teachers and had worked hard on their speaking skills. Many students were able to answer confidently and use accurate and precise language to convey their answers. Pronunciation and grammar were of a good standard and students were confident in using different tenses when necessary.

Correct conduct of the test by teacher-examiners is crucial and many teacher-examiners conducted the exam well. There were many schools/colleges where exams were conducted by a native speaker who did not have sufficient knowledge of the requirements of the AQA specification and they did not follow the instructions provided by AQA in the Paper 2 Teacher's Booklet. This adversely affected some students' marks. Poor timing sometimes led to a loss of marks.

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

Teacher-examiner-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiner-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. The feedback is provided on the basis of need only and will not be necessary for every school/college.

A breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test for each student in your centre is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via Centre Services.

Role-plays

In the Role-plays, the prescribed role in the Teacher’s booklet was adhered to by most teacher-examiners. Sometimes teacher-examiners re-worded the script and any subsequent response by the student was invalidated. Most students performed well in the tasks and had used the preparation time effectively.

However, some students were unsure about how to fulfil some of the Role-play tasks. For example, some students struggled with the task where they are required to ask the teacher-examiner a question. There were also instances where the teacher-examiner skipped to the next question without giving the opportunity to the student to ask the question task. For example, in Role-play 2, students are required to ask a question about the cost of repairing the computer. Some teacher-examiners did not allow the student to ask this question and went directly to the next task. Sometimes students gave a wrong answer because they could not read the prompt in Bengali on the Candidate card.

In the first task of Role-play 3, the student is talking to the hotel receptionist to call a taxi. Although the first task on the Candidate's card was ট্যাক্সি ডাকা, some students did not understand the word for taxi in Bengali. In Role-play 4 first task, the word “বাড়ি” was difficult to understand for a few students but most students answered well. In the second task in this Role-play, some teacher-examiners were not aware of the two different spellings and meanings of the word কি and কী and therefore did not convey the question correctly which was confusing for students because this was an unprepared task. Also in the final task of this Role-play, some teacher-examiners did not allow the student to ask a question which adversely affected their marks. The student prompt for this task was মনের মতো বাড়ি on the Candidate's card but many students just asked a question only on a বাড়ি not মনের মতো বাড়ি..

Apart from these comments, the remaining Role-plays were generally done well by students.

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

Photo cards

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Many teacher-examiners had clearly read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme, which deals with the marking of the Photo card, and passed this information on successfully to their students. Any teachers who are not fully aware of how the Photo card is marked are strongly recommended to read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme and to look at the examples that are given for the award of different marks.

The two minute maximum time for the Photo card was adhered to appropriately for the most part. In some cases, some students were unable to answer the questions within the allocated time. Some lower attaining students did not make full use of the whole of the two minutes allowed for this task.

Teachers are allowed to paraphrase the questions in this part of the exam, but the same meaning must be maintained, or the student’s answer is not credited. Most teacher-examiners asked the questions appropriately but some asked additional questions or missed questions out which impacted on the marks which could be awarded.

In order to score in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop at least three answers. To secure the top band, some description was required in their responses, with opinions and justification. Pleasingly, many students were able to do this. A few students were unable to justify their opinions successfully.

For higher mark bands, students needed to respond in standard Bengali, instead of different dialects of Bengali. Most students attempted to respond in standard Bengali.

The first question was always “ছবিতে কী কী দেখছেন?” and students generally described the people in it and/or what they were doing. Other questions generated a variety of responses from students, with a wide range of quality in responses.

The following Photo card questions are those that students struggled with most.

Photo card A

“তুমি কী কী উৎসব পালন করো?” 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 “ঈদ করি।” but did not develop this answer.

Photo card B

“স্কুলের কাজ ছাড়া কম্পিউটারে তুমি আর কী কী করো?” Some students did not understand this question because some teacher-examiners asked: “কম্পিউটারে স্কুলের কাজ ছাড়া তুমি আর কী কী করো?”

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 for students and many answers were in the present tense. The question was: “দূষণ কমানোর জন্য ভবিষ্যতে আমাদের কী কী করা উচিত?” Some students answered in the present tense: “আমি হেটে স্কুলে যাই।” Students did not have much difficulty in understanding the answers to the three prepared Photo card questions.

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. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to questions from the nominated theme.

The time spent on each theme is important. If a student spends less than one and a half minutes on one or both themes, there is a deduction of two marks for Communication. It should be noted that students' answers made following the maximum prescribed time are disregarded for marking purposes. Teachers are asked to bear in mind that if this extra time includes the only reference by the student to past or future time frames, then this can have an impact on the student's marks. Teachers should also avoid spending a significantly unequal time on each theme, with one theme being much longer than the other.

Pronunciation was sometimes weak and this also affected the degree of effective communication. Some teacher-examiners used the example questions in the Teachers' Booklet rather than tailoring their questions to the interests and abilities of their students.

When moving from one theme to another, most teachers did as instructed and referred to the change of theme on the recording. The best way to do this is at the beginning of the conversation by instructing the student এখন তোমার পছন্দের থিম ----- নিয়ে আমরা কথা বলবো and when the change of theme was about to happen, tell them : তোমার পছন্দের থিম _____ শেষ হলো এখন কথা বলবো থিম ---- নিয়ে। This was useful for the student and also for the examiner, who is required to make a note of the time spent on each theme.

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

- 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 on the AQA website. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in that document.
- 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 ____, candidate number ____, candidate name ____. Role-play number ____, photo card letter ____, general conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Use Bengali 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 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-examiner'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 three-minute maximum time, it may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.
- If there is a two-part question in the unseen questions, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so in the unprepared questions almost invariably leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

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 পছন্দে 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 for 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-examiner 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.

