



GCSE

BENGALI

8638/SH Paper 2 Speaking Higher 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.

The overall performance this year was good and students responded very well to the demands of the examination. Great credit for this goes to the students themselves and also to the hard work and skills of their teacher-examiners.

Most Higher tier students were able to perform very well in all three sections of the speaking test. They were evidently well prepared and had worked hard on their speaking skills. Most were able to answer with confidence and use correct and accurate language to communicate their answers. Pronunciation and grammar were also of a good standard and students were confident in their use of different tenses where necessary. A large number of students were awarded full marks.

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.

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

The Role plays at Higher tier were clearly more challenging than those at Foundation tier. 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 mark for Knowledge and use of language usually corresponded to the mark for Communication.

Some examples of students' performance is given below:

The first task of Role-play⁷ caused some issues as most of the students' answers to the question “আপনি কবে ও কার সাথে খেলা দেখতে চান?” were incomplete as they missed ‘which day’ “কবে” and as such missed one mark. In the second task which had two questions, the main problem was that teacher-examiner often asked both questions together. The first part of the question was well answered, but some students then did not go to the second part. Some teacher-examiners prompted “আর কী ধরনের সিট?” which led the student to answer the whole question. Also in the first task of Role-play¹¹, some students missed the second part of the question and could not score full marks.

Apart from these questions, students performed well on the Higher tier Role plays.

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

Photo card

Students were 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 three 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 because of hesitant answers.

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.

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. Most students tried to respond in standard Bengali.

The following questions are those which proved challenging to students

Photo card G

“তোমার জন্মদিন তোমার বন্ধুরা তোমার জন্য কী কী করে?” Some students found it challenging because they used first person, instead of third person. “আমার জন্মদিনে আমরা বন্ধুরা বাইরে খেতে গিয়েছিলাম।”

Photo card H

“টেকনোলজির ব্যবহার কীভাবে জীবনকে বদলে দিচ্ছে?” Some students found it hard to describe “কীভাবে জীবনকে বদলে দিচ্ছে”

Photo card I

“পরিবেশ দূষণ দিন দিন বাড়তে থাকলে ভবিষ্যতে কী কী হতে পারে?” Those students who understood “দূষণ” answered this question well. However, some students did not know the meaning of দূষণ

Photo card L

“ভবিষ্যত পরিকল্পনার ব্যাপারে তোমার স্কুল থেকে কী কী সহযোগিতা করা হয়েছে?”

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

General conversation

For the Higher tier General conversation, students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. The timing of the conversation at Higher tier is between five and seven 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 two 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.

The questions asked in the General conversation are also widely ranging. Students often performed more confidently on their nominated theme. Most students attempted a wide variety of language structures and vocabulary. The standard of pronunciation was consistently good and most students tried to use standard Bengali in the General conversation. Many were able to use three tenses, give their opinions and also asked a successful question.

Some teacher-examiners used the example questions in the Teachers’ Booklet rather than tailoring their questions to the interests and abilities of their students. Some teacher-examiners used a lot of closed questions which required a Yes/No answer which meant marks were lower than they could have been if more open questions had been asked.

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 teacher-examiners did not give students the opportunity to respond in different tenses, meaning some students did not make references to the past, present and future which impacted adversely on their marks.

When moving from one theme to another, most teacher-examiners did as required 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 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.

Advice to teacher-examiners.

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording level 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 _____, 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-examiner'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 unpredictable 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. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on, so at Higher tier encourage students to express them using a range of more sophisticated structures and a wider variety of adjectives than at Foundation tier.
- 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 their town is not going to be successful 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: এখন এক নম্বর টপিকের দিকে যাওয়া যাক, 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 seven 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-playtasks 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-examiner asks you for the unprepared questions in the Role-playand 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 Bengali. You can say প্রশ্নটা আবার বলবেন? for example.
- Practise using past tenses so that you can answer questions about what you have done in the past. You will be required to do this in at least two parts of the test.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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