



GCSE

BENGALI

8638/SF: Speaking (Foundation)
Report on the Examination

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General comments

The overall performance this year was very good and students responded very well to the demands of the new examination.

The new specification saw a significant change in the format of the exam. The inclusion of role-plays and photo cards have given an extra challenge to students to show their linguistic and communication skills in this exam.

The standard of students' performances varied, but even the less able students at Foundation tier were able to communicate something over the three parts of the exam.

There were instances where the teacher-examiner omitted some tasks in the Role-plays and Photo cards. As a result, some students could not achieve full marks.

Recordings were generally clear. However, there were many instances of incorrect passwords provided for encrypted CDs and memory sticks. It is advised that more care is needed in this aspect of the administration.

Most students were well prepared and were able to fulfil the tasks confidently, using accurate language to communicate their answers. Pronunciation and grammar were of a good standard and students were confident in their use of different time frames where necessary.

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

There were some instances of teacher-examiners not following the instructions in the *Instructions for the conduct of the examinations*, available on the AQA website. It is essential that all teacher-examiners are fully prepared to conduct tests and are familiar with the instructions to ensure students are not disadvantaged by poor conduct of the tests.

A copy of the Speaking Score Sheet used by examiners can be found at the back of the 2019 mark scheme.

Schools/colleges are reminded that a breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test per student is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via eAQA.

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 therefore is not provided for every teacher-examiner.

Role-plays

Questions in the role plays are designed to be appropriate for the age of the students and at the same time cover a range of scenarios. Most of the students performed well in the role-plays, however students appeared to find some individual tasks more challenging than others.

Teacher-examiners should keep to the script of the role-play because failure to do so may result in a student's response to a particular task not being creditworthy. If students have prepared sufficiently in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have notes which they can read from.

At this tier, there is no need to use any tense other than present in the role-play. Some tasks will still be fulfilled if a past or future reference is made, but this should be discouraged because errors which can impact on marks are often made when other tenses are attempted.

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

Below are more detailed comments on each of the role-plays:

Role-play 1

Task a

The question was “তুমি সাধারণত ইন্টারনেটে কী করো?” Students understood this question and answered well.

Task b

Students appeared to find the word “কেনাকাটা” demanding but most answered well.

Task c

This unprepared task was done well, with the majority of students understanding the key question words “আর কী করা যায়”

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

This was also done well.

Role-play 2

Task a

It was pleasing to see that most students understood “উপহার” and were able to say that he/she wants to buy a present.

Task b

This was done well, although some students did not understand “উপলক্ষে” and were awarded one mark for Communication.

Task c

This was done well.

Task d

Students often found this question task challenging. Some 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

This was done very well.

Task c

This task was done also very well.

Task d

“দাম” was a well known word - two marks for Communication were given for quite simple questions such as “টিকেটের দাম কত?”

Task e

This was done well by the majority of students.

Role-play 4

Task a

This was done very well.

Task b

This was done well.

Task c

This task asked for an opinion, which was done well by the majority, although the word “প্রতিবেশী” did not appear to be well known.

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

The majority of students asked a very simple question “তোমার এলাকা কেমন?” but achieved two marks.

Role-play 5

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

Most students gave two clear details about their uniform.

Task c

This was an opinion-giving task, which was done well.

Task d

This was very mixed as far as quality of responses went, but successful attempts were along the lines of “তোমার স্কুল কখন ছুটি হয়?”

Task e

The prompt was usually understood by students.

Role-play 6

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

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

Task c

This was done very well.

Task d

Some students appeared to find this task quite challenging because of the words “যোগ্যতা প্রয়োজন”

Task e

Some students obtained two marks for Communication with “জিসিএসই’র পরে কী করবে?”

Photo cards

This task is a new task. Most of the students performed well but a few students were unable to justify their opinions appropriately. It was clear that teachers had trained their students to talk about the photo and, in so doing, use several clauses.

The two minute maximum time for the photo cards were adhered to for the most part. When the fifth question cannot be asked before the two-minute point, it means that a mark in the top band cannot be awarded because all five questions must be answered clearly to access this band.

Most teacher-examiners used the questions in the Teacher’s Booklet appropriately for the students. 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. There were instances where teacher-examiners missed out questions by mistake, therefore resulting in students not being able to access the higher mark bands.

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

Students need to respond in standard Bengali, instead of different dialects of Bengali (eg Sylheti). Most students did use standard Bengali.

The first question was always “ছবিতে কী দেখছেন?” and students generally were able to describe the people in the photo and/or what they were doing.

Other questions encouraged a variety of responses from students, with a wide range of quality. Students appeared to find some questions more challenging than others.

The following questions are those that students appeared to find most challenging.

Photo card A

“শেষবার কবে, কার বিয়েতে গিয়েছিলে?”

Although this was a question which students could prepare for, it was not answered well. However, some did answer well by saying things such as “আমি গত বছর আমার মামার বিয়েতে গিয়েছি বিয়েতে আমার অনেক আত্মীয় এসেছিলেন বলে, সকলে মিলে খুব আনন্দ করেছি।”

Photo card C

“আমরা যে রিসাইকেল করি এর ফলে ভবিষ্যতে কী উপকার হতে পারে?”

One of the prepared questions is always designed to elicit an answer referring to an event in the past or future. Students appeared to find this question particularly demanding and many answers were in the present tense.

Photo card E

“সময় মতো ক্লাসে যাওয়া প্রয়োজন কেন?”

Some students did not understand this question and because of this, some teacher-examiners changed the question to “সময় মতো ক্লাসে না ‘গেলে কী অসুবিধা হতে পারে?” Students appeared to find this challenging 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 therefore these went over the maximum time. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme.

Pronunciation was often weak and this affected the degree of effective communication. Most of the teacher-examiners used only the example questions in the Teacher’s Booklet and some teacher-examiners asked the same questions of all of their students on the different themes.

On the other hand, there were examples of teacher-examiners who conducted the conversation in an exemplary way, asking questions aimed at the ability of the individual student and following up with additional questions after an extended response. A mixture of more open with some more closed questions worked best because usually this meant the student was on familiar ground with the open questions and could extend answers, whereas the closed questions, following up on what the student had just said, gave a more natural feel to the conversation.

The required length of the general conversation is between three and five minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of one and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher-examiner asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher-examiner says 'End of test'.

When moving from one theme to another, most teacher-examiners 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 এবার আমরা কথা বলবো থিম ---- নিয়ে। This was useful for the student and also for the examiner.

Another new 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 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. It is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher-examiner can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, time may be up and it is therefore too late.

Some students were able to deliver a well-structured fluent performance using pre-learnt responses. However, there was a lack of ability to interact spontaneously for some students, meaning that the top mark of five in the category of Spontaneity and fluency could not be awarded. Teacher-examiners should ask follow up questions seeking extra details and information to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate spontaneity.

Advice to teacher-examiners

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.
- The *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document is in the Secure Key Materials (SKM) area of e-AQA, available via the AQA website. If you do not have access to SKM, ask your examinations officer to download the document for you. 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 candidate:

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).

- Everything said by the teacher-examiner must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA.
- 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 the 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 often 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 may not 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. Do not 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 থিম ---- নিয়ে।
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", 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 do not do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you do not 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 prepared 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.
- 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.