



# **Examiners' Report**

## **Principal Examiner Feedback**

### **Summer 2018**

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In English as a Second Language  
(4ES0 03)  
Paper 03

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Summer 2018

Publications Code 4ES0\_03\_1806\_ER

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## General comments

This speaking examination is in three parts and lasts about 12 minutes. Each candidate is interviewed individually by an interlocutor. All of the interlocutor's questions are scripted. The speaking examination is recorded on a memory stick or disc and assessed by an examiner.

The interlocutor may only select the topics for candidates once they are in the examination room.

In Part 1, the candidate is asked a set of questions on a familiar topic. This part of the examination lasts about 3–5 minutes. In this session, the topics were shopping, the candidate's hometown, family and friends, and the things the candidate owns.

In Part 2, the candidate is given a task card and speaks at length (about 2 minutes) on the topic on the card. The candidate must answer the specific question mentioned on the task card. The candidate has 1 minute to prepare what s/he is going to say. In this session, the topics were technology in the candidate's life, the relationship between people and animals, visiting the candidate's country, and the world of work.

In Part 3, the candidate discusses in more depth issues related to the topic used in Part 2. This part of the examination lasts about 3 to 5 minutes.

Generally candidates had been very well prepared for the test and knew what to expect. It is devised to become increasingly difficult and this proved to be so for less able candidates, who struggled the most with Part 3. All candidates should be able to perform adequately in Part 1; Part 3 should be more challenging to C/D candidates; and Parts 2 and 3 should be challenging to F/G candidates.

## Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 20 using the grid printed in the specification (pages 20-21): Communicative ability and content 5 marks, Pronunciation and fluency 5 marks, Lexical accuracy and range 5 marks, and grammatical accuracy and range 5 marks.

## Candidates' responses

Generally, the candidates performed well on this paper. They responded well to the structure of the test and seemed engaged by the content. The topics were ones which were generally familiar to them and they could call on their life experience to answer the questions. Topics which were particularly well received by candidates, including the less able ones, were shopping and family and friends (Part 1) and visiting your country (Parts 2 and 3). Some candidates struggled in Part 1, Frame 4 (things you own) with the word 'own'. This was exacerbated by some interlocutors not being able to pronounce the word correctly. There was some overlap between answers to Frame 4 and Part 2 Card 1 "technology in your life" since many candidates talked about owning electronic devices. It would have been better if interlocutors had avoided this combination. In Part 2, Card 2 (the relationship between people and animals) elicited particularly good samples from those with pets. However, in Part 3 for this topic, mispronunciation of "zoos" by interlocutors caused some difficulties for candidates, and the words "threat" and

“extinct” were not understood by some candidates. In Part 2, Card 3 (visiting your country) was answered well but some candidates used L1 for food and customs. In Part 3 for this topic, many candidates did not understand the phrase “get the best out of”, but it elicited language at the top end of the range from stronger candidates. In Part 3, Frame 1 (technology in your life), the final question about “inventors” was misunderstood by some candidates but, again, elicited good responses from candidates at the top of the range.

### **Part One**

The aim of Part One is to ask candidates about familiar topics and most were able to answer questions with ease. However, there were candidates who were monosyllabic and some interlocutors did not ask the follow-up questions to help them extend their answers. These follow-up questions are an important feature of the paper and should be exploited whenever a candidate is less forthcoming. The purpose of the questions is to encourage the candidate to generate sufficient language on which to assess their ability based on the four criteria mentioned above. In consequence, the role of the interlocutor is to be aware of how responsive the candidate is and help them to reply fully to all questions.

Interlocutors should also spend at least three minutes on this section. If the candidate answers all of the questions on one of the topics, a second topic should be selected. Interlocutors from a number of centres did in fact do this, which enabled the candidate to produce more assessable language.

This is the least demanding part of the examination and most candidates handled it well. In a small minority of instances candidates did not understand one or more questions.

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### **Part Two**

The aim of this section is to provide the candidate with an opportunity to speak at length on a topic for which they have been given 1 minute’s preparation time. They are also required to answer a specific question.

The best candidates were able to expand on the topic in detail, giving examples and explanations to support their ideas and opinions. Their performance was also well organised and logical indicating that they had used the preparation time effectively to organise their thoughts.

The task card contains prompts to guide the candidate. These are ideas which the candidate may or may not choose to use in their response. Less able candidates tended to use these prompts as a list of items to comment on.

### **Part Three**

The aim of this part is to establish the upper reaches of the candidate’s linguistic ability; it also becomes increasingly difficult. There are also follow-up questions to allow the candidate every opportunity to show the extent of their ability. Many candidates had been well-prepared and quite naturally gave their opinion and then provided more information by way of support.

Less able candidates struggled with this part of the examination. Some misunderstood questions or asked for help in interpreting certain questions.

## **Interlocutors**

The interlocutors play an important role in enabling the candidates to show their linguistic ability and, although their performance is improving with each series, there are still problems which need to be highlighted.

Although, most of the interlocutors conducted the examination appropriately, there were others who did not follow the instructions contained in 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'. All of the wording and questions were provided either in the instructions or on the frame cards, yet some interlocutors did not keep to the questions both in Part 1 and in Part 3.

Those interlocutors who did not follow instructions did not appear to grasp the thinking behind the structure and purpose of each section of the test, and when they deviated from the script it made the task of the assessor more difficult. Whilst the interlocutor may have been endeavouring to make the exchange seem more natural, it is felt that on occasion they disadvantaged candidates by asking closed questions thereby depriving them of an opportunity to extend their answers. Others asked particularly obscure questions which were very difficult for candidates to answer. In Part 1, several questions had a follow up prompt to encourage candidates to extend their answers. Some interlocutors did not use this prompt whilst others tagged it on to the original question so that weaker candidates still did not extend their answers.

In Part 3, several interlocutors did not ask questions in groups as indicated on the frame card but selected questions somewhat haphazardly. The questions in Part 3 are grouped together thematically and aim to become increasingly difficult. This allows candidates to build on their ideas as this part of the test progresses. In Part 3, several questions had a follow-up question to encourage candidates to talk more. Some interlocutors failed to ask the second part of the question, and this prevented candidates from developing their ideas more fully and thereby displaying their ability to use more complex language. Some interlocutors, as in Part 1, tagged the follow up prompt onto the original question, thus extending the question and making it more difficult for weaker candidates in particular to understand. A number of interlocutors did not ask an adequate number of questions in Part 3; this also prevented candidates from displaying the full range of their language abilities.

## **Other observations concerning interlocutors**

1. Some interlocutors needed to prepare more for the examination and have a clear idea of how the exam was organised and what the questions were before they started. In some instances, there were long pauses during the examination as interlocutors tried to work out what the next section entailed. This situation must be avoided as it is potentially unsettling for candidates.
2. In preparation for the examination, interlocutors should ensure that all questions are familiar to them for the purposes of ensuring accurate intonation and pronunciation during the examination.
3. At the start of the examination the interlocutor must repeat the candidate's name and number for clarity. It is obviously essential that this be accurate.

Interlocutors are asked to be *extremely careful* when stating candidate names and numbers. Interlocutors are asked to use the candidate's name as recorded on the attendance record, *not* their 'English' name. Several interlocutors did recognise the need for this and asked the candidate to state their full name when it was the candidate who gave only an 'English' name.

4. Some interlocutors invented their own questions and/or commented on candidates' answers. In such instances, this was to the detriment of the candidate. Interlocutors are required to adhere strictly to the questions on the card, in the order in which they appear, and must make no comments. Whilst it is recognised that interlocutors are mistakenly endeavouring to make the examination more 'conversational', they are reminded that they must adhere fully to the script and are assured that such adherence does indeed benefit the candidates.
5. Some questions have additional prompts to encourage candidates to extend their answers. These prompts should be used as necessary and not simply tagged on to the end of the original question.
6. Some interlocutors used words of encouragement such as 'that's good', 'OK' and 'that's very interesting'. These should be avoided as they may mislead the candidates about their performance.
7. In some instances, such words of encouragement also interfered with the clarity of the candidate's response for assessment purposes or seemed to be interpreted by the candidate as an indication that they should stop speaking, which led to shorter answers than the candidate may otherwise have produced.
8. Candidates may ask for a question to be repeated. Interlocutors should not take this as a cue to paraphrase the question but should simply repeat the question as given. However, if a candidate specifically asks for clarification of a question or word from a question, interlocutors should give a brief explanation.
9. Some interlocutors did not give candidates time to formulate their response to a question or paraphrased the questions before they were asked to do so by the candidate. On occasion, interlocutors provided vocabulary or even ideas when candidates faltered, not allowing time for candidates to overcome any difficulty independently. Interlocutors are reminded that they should never correct a candidate's use of language.
10. Interlocutors needed to listen to what the candidates were saying to avoid irrelevant or repetitive questions from being asked. On occasion, interlocutors asked a question that the candidate had just answered in their development of the previous question. In such cases, interlocutors should move on to the next question rather than ask a redundant question. This would not be seen as

deviating from the script. Interlocutors should also choose Frames/Cards for Parts 1 and 2 that are least likely to lead to repetition.

11. Interlocutors are reminded that Part 2 is designed to elicit a 'long turn' from the candidate and that the interlocutor should not speak during this turn. Interlocutors should not indicate orally that they are listening as this could potentially interrupt the candidate.
12. Interlocutors needed to check whether a suitable recording of the candidate had been obtained before dispatching the audio file for assessment. On occasion, incomplete or poorly recorded audio files were sent for assessment.
13. Interlocutors must use the *latest* cover sheet and must complete a cover sheet for *each* candidate.

### **Candidates**

If a candidate is speaking quietly, the interlocutor should ask her/him to speak up.

### **Length of the test**

Interlocutors are reminded that the test should last about 12 minutes. In general, the timings were much more consistent across centres this year and, as already mentioned, many interlocutors used an additional frame in Part 1 to ensure this was long enough. Unfortunately, there were still some centres where the tests were too short. They are reminded that Part 1 should last about 3 minutes not including the initial clarification of the candidate's name and Part 3 should last about 5 minutes.

### **Administrative matters**

1. As mentioned above, interlocutors are reminded to use the *latest* student cover sheet. They should complete one for each student and include the following:
  - Centre Name
  - Centre Number
  - Candidate Name
  - Date of test
  - Name of interlocutor
  - Details of the recording
  - Frames used in the test
2. Interlocutors are not required to mark the candidate's performance.
3. Many of the recordings were received very late. Centres are reminded that the Paper 3 (Speaking) examination must be conducted up to and including the

date of the written examinations (Paper 1 and 2) and must be dispatched within 48 hours of completion of examining.

### **Equipment**

Whilst in general recording quality was good, some of the recordings were of extremely poor quality and it was very difficult for the assessor to hear what candidates were saying. Interlocutors must ensure that good quality recordings are obtained of all candidates. It is recommended that the equipment, recording quality and level as well as positioning of microphone be checked carefully before the start of the examination to ensure that the best possible recording of the candidate is obtained.

### **Room**

The room selected for the examination was not always a quiet one, and many distracting noises can be heard on the recordings such as traffic, vacuum cleaners, music, building work and people moving about outside. School bells ringing and consequent noise of students on break or moving to another lesson interfered with the quality of some the recordings. On occasion a room was selected which had such poor acoustics that it affected the quality of the recordings. It is requested that a quiet room with good acoustics be used for the examination. Candidates were also distracted by people moving in/out or around the exam room. This situation is always disadvantageous to the candidate and must be avoided.

### **Mobile Phones**

Interlocutors should remind all candidates to switch off their mobile phones before entering the exam room. It is also requested that interlocutors do the same. Signals from mobile phones can interfere with the recording and make assessment difficult. It is therefore in the interests of candidates for this advice to be followed.



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