

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

(9280) Paper 4 Speaking
Report on the examination

November 2019

REPORT ON EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL GCSE English as a Second Language 9280/S November 2019

Introduction

There were some very impressive responses to this November's speaking paper which demonstrated good preparation for the two tasks that are assessed within the examination.

There were many detailed responses which showed that students and teachers were very much aware of the rigour needed within the three themes examined in this specification.

Preparation

Centres are reminded that students may have 10 minutes preparation time in order to prepare for the photo card. It was clear that many students had prepared well. There were some excellent responses which showed that many students had taken note of what was in the picture and paid close attention to the questions within the bullet points. On some occasions, there was a good response to the picture but less so to the other two bullet points.

Conduct of the test

Recordings

Centres are reminded that they must ensure that recordings are clear. There were several occasions where there was background noise, and quiet recordings where the microphone favoured the teacher-examiner rather than the student. Centres are encouraged to test the recording levels before the tests take place to ensure that the student can be heard easily.

Timing

It should be noted that there are time limits for the test. Although the instructions are approximate, centres should ensure that test lengths are within the limits suggested. The photo card should last approximately 3-4 minutes and the general conversation should last approximately 6-7 minutes. Centres should be aware that full marks for the test can be achieved within these time frames. Overlong tests can have an impact on the overall performance level where the student tires and starts to make errors. Centres are reminded that if a student completes the photo card within a shorter timeframe than indicated, they should not elongate the conversation to make up for this. The whole test should last no longer than 10 minutes.

Most teacher-examiners kept to the timings given above but there were instances where they were overlong, particularly where the general conversation element was too long. To a lesser extent, there were some instances where the conversation only lasted 4 minutes. This can mean that the student does not have the opportunity to show what they are capable of within the conversation. Teacher-examiners should take note of the time the conversation starts in order to avoid this.

Photo cards

The individual photo cards appeared to be received well by students. The bullet points were well covered by the majority of centres although there were a few occasions where a teacher-examiner failed to ask all the bullet point questions. Where a student did not fully expand upon the bullet point the prompts provided were used well by teacher-examiners, or adapted appropriately to help students respond to the questions. Centres are reminded that these prompts are not compulsory. Many centres used their own

prompts successfully based on the responses of students to ask further questions if they felt they needed more information.

Students appeared to find all the cards accessible and were clearly well prepared in the format of this task. Most students were able to describe what they could see in the photo. The strongest responses did not just describe the physical nature of the people and the background, they also described their emotions. Many described the fear of the women watching what they perceived to be a horror movie in card C, the joy of a father making music with his son in card B and the feelings of families in cards A and D.

It was clear that the language used in the cards was within the experience of the students and they were able to respond to the three bullet points. The majority of students were able to give understandable replies to most questions offering opinions, with many students justifying these opinions convincingly.

The most able students explained opinions easily, showing not only a good grasp of the grammar and accurate use of the language but some flair and creativity in their responses. Some students required prompts in order to sustain the task but were still able to show some development within their response and offer at least one opinion.

General Conversation

The general conversation is based on two themes: Local, national, international and global areas of interest and Current and further study and employment. It should be noted that there should be an equal amount of time spent on each theme.

Centres were able to choose topics within these themes which reflected the individual student's personal interests. Where this was the case, students responded enthusiastically, and in great detail, often relating their own personal experience, providing at times some moving accounts. This produced very natural spontaneous conversations with lots of opinions and thoughtful justification of these opinions. However, a number of teacher-examiners only followed the suggested questions within the Teacher's Booklet. The questions are a basis for developing a line of conversation and not a list of questions that must be asked. Where the teacher-examiner jumped from topic to topic within a theme it became confusing for some students.

Skilful questioning entailed introducing a topic within the theme, posing a series of questions, then taking note of the responses of the students and asking further questions based on these responses to find out further information.

Centres are reminded that it is in the best interests of students to announce when moving from the first theme of the conversation to the second theme.

Many students were able to offer responses in extended sequences of speech, narrating events using relevant detail. They were able to offer opinions and justify the reasons for these opinions.

There was a range of marks awarded. The most successful responses used a wide variety of structures and language confidently.

There were some instances where marks for Knowledge and Use of language were restricted by students not being asked questions in the past or future tenses or even any reference to past or future events. It is important to note that for students to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme they must be given the opportunity to use tenses other than the present. Centres are reminded that syntax is important and for responses to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme there must be a wide variety of linguistic structures and a wide range of vocabulary – not just a high level of accuracy.

It was pleasing to note that many students displayed good pronunciation throughout the conversation, however there were some instances where students had pre-learnt responses and consequently the intonation was not always consistent with the pronunciation.

Many students were able to participate in a natural conversation, but some students were asked a pre-set list of questions that did not allow them to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme for Spontaneity

and fluency as these also resulted in pre-learnt responses. It is not within the spirit of the examination to ask similar questions to all students. To reach the higher levels of the mark scheme the student needs to react naturally to the questions asked and the conversation will have a natural flow to it. This was achieved where students were asked questions which followed on naturally from their previous responses and there was a clear line of questioning within the theme.

In summary, there were many interesting performances from students and teacher-examiners are to be congratulated on the preparation of their students for the speaking examination element of this specification.

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FAIR ASSESSMENT PROMISE

In line with OxfordAQA's Fair Assessment promise, the assessment design, marking and awarding of this examination focused on performance in the subject, rather than English language ability.



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