



GCSE

Bengali

8638/SH Speaking (Higher)

Report on the examination

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General Comments

The Summer 2025 GCSE Bengali Higher Tier Speaking Test successfully met its goal of assessing student oral proficiency, with a mean mark of 56.80 out of 60 from 276 students. Performance was largely in line with previous years, which can be attributed to better tier entry decisions and enhanced preparation strategies, especially for the Role-play and Photo card tasks.

This report provides a detailed overview of the Higher Tier Speaking Test, covering both teacher conduct and student performance. It highlights best practices and identifies areas for improvement. The content of this report is based on a broad sample of student performances, making it representative of the entire cohort.

Key Areas for Improvement

Quality of Recordings:

- **Positive:** The majority of tests were conducted in suitable environments with good-quality equipment.
- **Issue:** Some recordings suffered from background noise, which affected audibility.

Teacher Conduct

Test Routine Procedures:

Teachers mostly followed guidelines, but some did not introduce each student correctly (e.g., Role-play number, Photo card letter, and Conversation theme). It's important to announce changes in themes during the General Conversation in Bengali.

Timings:

The Photo card task generally stayed within the time limit. However, some General Conversation themes fell short of the minimum time, impacting Communication marks.

Role-play Task:

Most teacher-examiners adhered to the prescribed script, but there were instances where rephrasing led to incorrect responses, resulting in a 0 mark for Communication.

Photo Card Task:

While paraphrasing was allowed, some teacher-examiners rephrased questions, supplying the key vocabulary, which affected the validity of student responses.

General Conversation:

Some teacher-examiners used a set list of questions without adapting to students' abilities or interests, which hindered the spontaneous nature of the conversation.

The requirement for students to ask a question was often forgotten, affecting the score in communication.

Recommendations for Teacher-Examiners

Role Play

Stick to the Script: Follow the script as outlined in the Teacher's Role. Deviating from it will result in the student receiving a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.

Intervene if Necessary: If a student begins to give an incorrect answer, stop them and repeat the question. Once a student has completed an incorrect answer, they will receive a mark of 0 for Communication for that task, even if they answer correctly after the question is repeated.

Repetition: If a student asks for the question to be repeated or does not answer, you may repeat the question.

Handling Two-Part Questions: In an unprepared task with a two-part question, ask the first part, wait for an answer, and then ask the second part. Neglecting to do this often leads to the student needing to ask for a repetition.

Photo Card

Paraphrasing: You may paraphrase a question as long as the meaning remains unchanged. Be careful to ensure the meaning is consistent, or the student's response may not be credited.

Ask All Questions: Ensure you ask all five questions listed in the Teacher's Booklet, but avoid asking any follow-up questions.

Manage Time: Monitor the timing carefully. If a student's responses are very lengthy, and you may not have time to ask the final question within the two-minute maximum, it may be better to interrupt and move on to the next question.

General Conversation

Encourage Variety: Encourage students to use a wide range of language structures and vocabulary.

Opinion Justification: Train students to provide and justify opinions without necessarily being prompted. This can serve as a basis for different starter activities.

Sensitivity to Ability: Be mindful of the student's ability. For example, a student struggling to describe their town is unlikely to succeed in discussing more complex topics like social and global issues.

Tailor Questions: Try to ask questions that reflect the individual student's interests rather than asking identical questions to all students.

Promote Spontaneity: Foster a more spontaneous conversation by asking follow-up questions based on the student's previous response.

Announce Theme Changes: Announce any change in theme in Bengali.

Time Management: Keep track of the time. If one of the themes is covered in less than 1 minute and 30 seconds, marks will be deducted for Communication. The General Conversation section should not exceed five minutes; anything beyond this will not be marked.

Prompt Questions: Remind the student to ask you a question if they forget to do so. It's better to prompt them to ask about their nominated theme to avoid missing it later.

Address Nonsensical Questions: If the student's first question doesn't make sense, ask them to try again with a different question.

Student Performance

Role-Play Task

Most students showed competence in responding to the bullet points with concise answers. The most challenging tasks were those requiring transactional communication (e.g., requests for help). Students struggled with linking questions to context. Some students often struggled to fully address both parts of a task (e.g., where and with whom breakfast was taken).

Specific Task Challenges

Task 5, Role-play 7: Some students struggled with the two-part nature of the question about using tablets in lessons and why.

Task 2, Role-play 8: Some students found it challenging to provide an opinion about news on television and why.

Task 3, Role-play 9: Some students could not exactly decipher the demand of this task, what type of charity is their favourite, and why.

Task 3, Role-play 10: Several students could not relate the problems there are with the environment in their area and talked about local area issues irrelevant to the environment instead.

Task 3, Role-play 11: The most challenging task on this card was giving an opinion about working as an interpreter and why.

Task 5, Role-play 12: On task 5, some students talked about where they will go for higher education, whereas the task was asking what they will do to get into higher education.

Photo card Task

- Most students provided well-developed responses with clear opinions and justifications.
- Students who did not understand question formulations often gave irrelevant answers.
- Some students gave overly detailed descriptions that lacked clarity, affecting pronunciation and fluency.

Specific Task Challenges

Task 5, Photo Card G: Some students needed to rephrase the element on task 5 about the best way to spend free time according to their parents.

Task 5, Photo Card H: Some students hesitated when asked about how the internet can change our lives in the future.

Task 3, Photo Card I: A few students needed a reminder about responding to this task properly, as in some instances, they were missing out on the emphasis of 'besides recycling' in this element.

Task 3, Photo Card J: Some students were hesitant to talk about how bad weather could affect the holiday.

Task 2, Photo Card K: Some students needed a reminder about responding to this task properly, as in some instances, they were missing out on the emphasis of 'behaviour displayed outside of the classroom' in this element.

Task 5, Photo Card L: As in photo card K, some students were missing out on the emphasis of 'getting into a job as soon as you finish your studies' in this element.

General Conversation

- Most students responded well, expressing opinions and justifications.
- The best performances demonstrated fluency and a wide range of language structures.
- Pronunciation was inconsistent, with some students anglicising cognates.
- Pre-learned responses led to a lack of authentic conversation, limiting higher marks in fluency and spontaneity.

Advice for Students

- **Use Preparation Time Wisely:** Make the most of the 12 minutes of preparation time.
- **Prepare Your Responses:** You can write down exactly what you plan to say for the Role-play tasks and the three questions on the Photo card.
- **Photo Card Responses:** Aim to prepare answers of at least three sentences, each containing a verb, for the Photo card questions.
- **Listen Carefully:** Pay close attention to the questions your teacher-examiner asks during the unprepared Role-play and Photo card questions, as well as all questions in the General Conversation.
- **Learn Common Question Words:** Familiarise yourself with common question words.
- **Request Repetition in Bengali:** You can ask for a question to be repeated at any point in the test, but ensure you do so in Bengali. For example, you can say 'আমি বুঝিনি। আপনি পুনরাবৃত্তি করে বলুন।'
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Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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