



GCSE

Polish

8688/SF Speaking (Foundation)

Report on the examination

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General Comments

This year saw 538 entries, slightly fewer than the 550 recorded last year, but still a record for the number of students taking this qualification at this level. This is both highly pleasing and encouraging, particularly at a time when the number of students enrolling in other languages is declining.

Overall, the exam was performed well, with results comparable to previous years. As before, the standard of student work varied widely, from those who struggled with the speaking tasks to those who would have scored high marks even at the Higher tier.

Generally, it was also gratifying to observe better conduct of the exam by many teacher-examiners.

There was still, however, several issues that negatively affected students' marks.

Poor timing sometimes led to a loss of marks.

For the Role-Plays, teachers occasionally deviated from the script, resulting in students' answers not being credited.

In the Photo Cards, while teachers are permitted to paraphrase the questions, sometimes the alternative versions used were not true paraphrases. Additionally, there were instances where teachers asked only three questions instead of five. It is vital for teacher-examiners to read the advice sections at the end of this report and incorporate the recommendations into their future testing.

The following comments aim to provide a thorough overview of the 2025 GCSE Polish Speaking Test, covering both teacher conduct and student performance.

Role-Plays

Students generally performed less well in the Role-Play than in the General Conversation, indicating a lack of preparation and understanding of exam expectations. Most teachers followed the prescribed role in the Teacher's booklet, but some reworded the script, invalidating student responses. Examiners occasionally asked unscripted questions or omitted required ones. Two-part questions, requiring separate responses for opinions and reasons, were not consistently handled well by teachers. Additionally, few examiners provided key words when prompting students to ask a question, leading to uncredited responses.

Many students did not pay enough attention to the context provided in English and Polish on their Role-Play cards, resulting in inaccurate or irrelevant answers. Teachers should read the scenario introduction at the start and remind students to carefully review the scenario during preparation.

This year, it was apparent that some students responded based on their own experiences rather than adopting the role described in the scenario. This approach occasionally made it more difficult for them to fully address the task, particularly in situations involving cultural or

traditional themes such as Easter, where students may not have had personal experience. To support students in these cases, it is important to emphasise the need to stay “in role” and engage with the scenario context as outlined on the Role-Play card.

Interrogatives were particularly challenging, causing difficulty in formulating required questions. Some students managed to ask the correct question using the prompt words, but others asked random or unrelated questions or merely read the prompt aloud, which could not be credited.

Often, students gave more information than necessary, which should be discouraged. Despite this, most students responded well to unpredictable tasks, showing their ability to use language spontaneously. All students need to familiarise themselves with the Role-Play format and the meaning of “?” and “!” symbols.

The published mark scheme provides details on responses worth two, one, or zero marks per task.

In Role-Plays, the following tasks generally caused the most problems for students:

Role-Play 2

Some students confused Easter with Christmas, which affected their responses. In Task 2, many did not know the word *pisanka*, and a few had no opinion as they were unfamiliar with the tradition. For Task 4, quite a few students misunderstood the term *uroczystość* (“celebration”), instead describing Polish Easter traditions such as egg painting (*malowanie pisanek*), *śmigus-dyngus*, or *święconka*. In Task 5, the required inclusion of the word *Polish* in their questions was often omitted.

Role-Play 3

In Task 3, examiners frequently did not provide students the opportunity to ask their question. Students commonly asked about ticket prices. Additionally, in Task 4, a surprising number of students were unable to express their opinion about ticket prices. When asked about travel frequency in Task 5, some students responded with minimal answers such as *nie za często* (“not too often”).

Role-Play 4

In Task 1, many students misunderstood the prompt “How can I help you?” and asked about the price of postcards rather than stating the number they wished to buy. Some students also requested unrelated items such as milk. In Task 2, numerous students responded *Nic więcej, dziękuję* (“Nothing else, thank you”) to the prompt “Anything else?”, thereby missing the opportunity to ask about stamps. In Task 5, some students described the attractions of Gdynia instead of expressing an opinion about the local people. Furthermore, confusion was noted between *mieszkańcy* (“local people”) and *mieszkania* (“apartments”), and there were misunderstandings regarding the description of large or tall buildings.

Role-Play 6

In Task 3, some students gave only the name of their maths teacher instead of describing them, which limited their ability to gain full marks.

Photo Cards

While some teachers paraphrased entire questions correctly, many did not maintain the exact meaning, invalidating student responses. Some teachers introduced their own questions or added extra ones, reducing the time for students to fully answer the prescribed questions. Additionally, some teachers only asked three questions instead of five.

On the other hand, students generally seemed well-prepared for this part of the test and completed the Photo Card task comfortably within the time limit at both tiers. At Foundation tier, where the time limit is two minutes, there were some cases in which all five questions were not asked within the time allowed. This was occasionally due to a very slow pace by the student, but more often the result of overly long and repetitive answers to the first three questions, especially the one requesting a description of the photo. Although good development of response is to be welcomed, students need to ensure that what they say still addresses the question of what can be seen in the photo. It is worth noting the continuing English influence in commonly used collocations by students, such as *w tej fotografii*.

In some questions, some students gave incomplete answers, missing the justification. Some students rushed to answer the questions, resulting in listing items and giving very short answers without a verb, which meant the student did not meet the requirements for full marks. The word *zalety* is often still not known by students, and quite frequently they list *wady* ("disadvantages") instead.

To score in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop at least three responses with several clauses. A lack of expansion in some answers prevented top marks.

Overall, questions discriminated well, with a wide range in the quality of answers, but some were done noticeably less well than others. These were the ones which students found most challenging:

Photo Card A

Task 4: This question proved difficult for many students. Some struggled to describe their favourite actor or actress, often simply naming them without further detail. Others were unable to answer the question at all.

Task 5: Some students had difficulty identifying advantages of having free time.

Photo Card B

Task 4: The term *najbliżsi* was often not recognised or was misunderstood. Although it can refer to both close family and friends, many students referred only to friends (e.g. *Moi najbliżsi przyjaciele spotykają się w parku* – "My closest friends meet in the park"), while the task expected a response focused rather on family.

Photo Card C

Task 2: The word *zalety* ("advantages") was sometimes confused with *wady* ("disadvantages").

Task 5: Some students talked about whether their place of living was good or not for their own rest or holiday, e.g., *Mam ogród, więc mogę odpoczywać* ("I have a garden so I can rest"), *Mam przyjaciół, więc spędzamy razem czas* ("I have my friends so we spend time together").

Photo Card D

Task 3: Some students listed ways to recycle rubbish, including plastic, rather than focusing on ways to reduce the use of plastic.

Task 4: A surprising number of students could not answer this question.

Photo Card E

Task 2: The phrase *zadania domowe* was sometimes interpreted as "household chores" rather than "homework" (*Pomagam w domu, sprzątam pokój* - "I help at home, I clean my room").

Task 3: Many students struggled to name advantages of being a student - this question was generally found difficult by students.

Photo Card F

Task 4: The word *zawody* was still frequently misunderstood as referring to sports competitions rather than professions (*Lubię oglądać zawody sportowe* - "I like watching sports competitions").

Task 5: Some students were unfamiliar with the phrase *praca na pół etatu* ("part-time work").

General Conversation

For most students, the Conversation section of the test was where they performed best. Most students achieved their highest marks in the Conversation section. However, there were occasions when teachers focused on only one theme or mixed themes, and sometimes repeated the theme from the Photo Card, which limited the maximum Communication marks to five. Timing issues also occurred, affecting the marks for Communication as explained in the mark schemes. If time on one or both themes was below the minimum requirement, the maximum Communication mark was lowered by one band. For example, a mark of 8 (level 4) would be reduced to 6 (level 3).

For lower-achieving students, the questioning style often did not allow them to demonstrate their full potential. Some examiners relied on example questions without considering the student's ability and used closed questions that restricted the students' responses. Teachers also sometimes repeated questions students had already answered.

Most students either asked a question at their chosen time or were prompted by the teacher at the end, sometimes resulting in the question not being asked within the maximum time limit and a one-mark penalty for Communication. Teachers should remember they are allowed to prompt the student to ask a question by saying, for example *Masz jakieś pytanie?* or

Czy chciałbyś/chciałabyś mnie o coś spytać? Some teachers did this effectively, even though the students initially said *Nie*, but others did not prompt effectively.

At Foundation tier, most students were given the opportunity to use all three-time frames, thereby gaining access to the 9-10 band for Range and Accuracy. Many students employed complex structures and vocabulary, achieving top marks for Language and Accuracy. Overall, students' vocabulary was mostly good, but some colloquial words were used which were not always appropriate during the formal exam and may reflect the process of learning Polish through listening, e.g. *matma*, *spoko*, *gadać*.

A lot of English words were conjugated in Polish, sometimes with a complete change of meaning: *egzemplarz* (przykład), *kondycja* (warunki), *polucja* (zanieczyszczenie), *juniform* (mundurek), *juniversity* (uniwersytet), *rewizja* (powtórka), *adykcja* (uzależnienie), *karawan* (przyczepa), *akomodacja* (zakwaterowanie), *klasa* (lekcja), *forma* (lekcja wychowawcza), *studenci* (uczniowie), *dedykacja* (poświęcenie, zaangażowanie), *energetyczny* (energiczny, pełen energii), *sportowny* (wysportowany), *ekspresować się* (wyrazić siebie), *jedzenie procesowane* (przetworzone), *beneficjalne* (korzystne), *krystianka* (chrześcijanka), *linia* (kolejka), *monitor* (ekran) *w kinie*. There are Polish equivalents for all these words.

The verb "go" was overused, with examples like *szłem na wakacje*, *szedłem do Polski*, *iść do Ameryki*, *poszliśmy do Hiszpanii*. The verb "have" was misused; instead of *mieć*, some students said *mać*, as in *ja bym chciał mać*, *dobrze jest mać*. The word *zawód*, *zawody* was misunderstood by many students, with answers ranging from sports disciplines (e.g. *żużel*) to school subjects (e.g. *chemia*).

English influence was particularly evident in phrases and structures like: *spędzać* (meaning *wydawać*) *pieniądze*, *w złej kondycji* (meaning *stanie*), *media społeczne*, *w moim zdaniu*, *rozmawiać na telefonie*, *nie to co zapłaciłam za*, *dobrze jest mieć kogoś kto gadać z*, *interesuję się w gry*, *słuchać do muzykę*, *szkoła*, *co chodziłam do*, *co oni wierzą w*. Other common mistakes included: *te ludzie*, *są więcej krzesel*, *są dwa pany*, *idę do formy*, *mam pierwszą klasę* (lekcję), *z przyjaciółmi*. The most common English influence was the use of *student* instead of *uczeń*.

Some words were used in their English form, most commonly "Sixth Form", "Science", "Art", "break", "form", "half term", and "apprenticeship". It is pleasing to note that some students elaborated and explained their meaning in detail in Polish.

While some students used limited vocabulary and mixed time frames, noun cases, and verb endings, others incorporated a wider range of structures, including modal verbs and common subordinating conjunctions.

Pronunciation and intonation were usually very good or excellent, with many students receiving the highest marks, although a few showed little intonation.

Advice to teachers

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.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students must 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 available in the Assessment resources tab of the AQA website language pages as well as in the secure Centre Services area. It is essential that you follow the instructions in this document, which are updated each year.
- In the *Instructions* document, you are reminded how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student: GCSE Polish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, candidate number ____, candidate name ____. Role-Play number ____, Photo Card letter ____, General Conversation theme chosen by student Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Use Polish 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 as good as you would like. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.

Role-Play

- Keep to your 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 zero 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 zero 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.

Photo Card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided that 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 move on to the next question.

General Conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be

described as *interesujące* or *nudne* and there are other ways to say *lubię to*. To introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *zabawne, niesamowite, wspaniałe, świetne, nieprzyjemne*; and verbs such as *uwielbiam, interesuję się, znajduję to, nienawidzę tego, to mnie niepokoi*.

- 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 is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, e.g. the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- 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 Polish: *Przejdźmy teraz do tematu rozmowy numer jeden*, etc.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a marking penalty – see the published mark schemes.
- The maximum length of the General Conversation is five minutes. Anything said after the maximum time 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.
- 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 questions on the Photo Card.
- For the Photo Card questions, try to prepare answers that consist 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.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Polish. For example, you can say *Proszę powtórzyć*.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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