Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in French (4FR0/03)
Pearson Edexcel Certificate
in French (KFR0/03)

Paper 3: Speaking

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International GCSE/ Edexcel Certificate French
Unit 3: Speaking
Examiner Report

Section A

It was pleasing to note that a significant majority of presentations were delivered with a high degree of confidence, indicating excellent levels of preparation. Where candidates are confident during this part of the speaking test, it often helps them to feel reassured in respect of the subsequent elements. In cases where natural hesitation occurs, this is regarded as being part of the process and does not impact in any negative way on marks awarded for Presentation/Communication/Fluency. On the contrary, some natural hesitation is a welcome indication of spontaneity, this being particularly important during the ensuing discussion.

Whereas candidates have had ample opportunity to prepare their presentation, it is natural for the discussion to be less developed in many instances. As the focus of the discussion is a topic of the candidate's choice, most took full advantage of this opportunity to clarify and exemplify themes raised during the presentation. Interviewers were most skilful in effecting a smooth transition from presentation to discussion. Very confident candidates often seemed more at ease during the discussion itself, as they were in a strong position to enter into a meaningful and free flowing dialogue, on a subject about which they were usually highly motivated. The same group of candidates tended to perform exceptionally well in cases where the interviewer proceeded to ask unexpected questions. This excellent practice was in evidence at most centres and underlines the importance of interviewers knowing their candidates well in advance of the speaking test. In those rare instances where the candidate seemed to be meeting the interviewer for the first time, there was often much emphasis being placed upon the sample questions provided to centres. It would be really helpful to such candidates if they were able to have met the interviewer on a number of occasions, well in advance of the speaking test, as appreciating the strengths and weaknesses one's candidates is usually key to their potential success. In almost all cases, the interviewer had a prior awareness of each individual candidate's linguistic level. It was therefore much easier to pitch the discussion at the optimum level.

Candidates had selected the usual wide range of images for use in section A. These images typically reflected the requirements of this specification and therefore portrayed all three prescribed elements: people, objects and interaction. In almost all cases where the candidate selected a picture based on personal experience, both the initial presentation and even the ensuing discussion were fluent. There were nevertheless some instances where the candidate seemed to have been provided with a picture immediately prior to the examination, possibly for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the examination. These were only rarely successful as a resource, as it was usually much more difficult to exploit the discussion. These pictures tended to contain details with which the candidate was much less familiar. The discussions they engendered would tend to lie beyond the linguistic reach of the candidate. These pictures were rarely suited to the three stages of questions required within the discussion element.

Where pictures were both in colour and clear, it allowed the interviewer to exploit the image more comprehensively during the discussion, targeting specific detail where appropriate. Pictures usually worked well if there were several things happening within the same scene. If the candidate was able to relate to people and events within the picture, responses tended to be much more spontaneous, being based upon the candidate's personal experiences. Images containing lots of activity did however have a negative impact upon performance where the candidate was unfamiliar with the people and events portrayed. In these instances, there seemed to be rather too much happening in the picture, with the potential for too many ensuing issues well beyond the candidate's grasp.

Cartoon-based pictures were often chosen by candidates this series. In many instances, these were developed in original and diverse ways. This style of picture worked most effectively for the more confident candidates. One of the most universally successful scenarios involved pictures where family members were depicted. It has been clear across several examination series that images of this type of image allow less confident candidates to settle into the discussion, after having presented key elements regarding family members and events. Such candidates were less likely to become confused, as they felt comfortable and familiar with the content. The candidate's frame of mind was often assisted by such images, as they tended to portray joyful events, including family celebrations. The issues arising from these images involved areas the candidate was keen to discuss and more importantly able to discuss, with some development. Even less confident candidates were often able to take some control over the discussion.

As per previous series, interviewers would only tend to lead candidates into more complex discussions if they were sure that the candidate would be able feel confident with this level of interaction. There were however some cases where candidates were faced with linguistic and conceptual tasks beyond their reach.

During the discussion, it is a requirement that all three stages of questioning be included. This involves questions relating directly to the picture, questions which go further and questions on the wider topic area.

The questioning techniques used in the discussion were usually both varied and appropriate to the task. There were a few interviewers who had not registered what the candidate had produced during the presentation, as they then proceeded to elicit the same information during the discussion. Most interviewers were skilled in minimising the use of closed questions. As most interviewers knew their candidates well, they were equally mindful to avoid asking questions beyond the reach of their candidates.

Most interviewers only rarely interrupted candidates in mid response. This usually limits candidate performance, such as in cases where they are not allowed adequate time to expand responses via the use of a subordinate clause. In those instances where an interviewer's question was misinterpreted by a candidate, it was excellent practice to divert the candidate towards the desired theme. This was typically done in a sensitive and unobtrusive manner, indicative of excellent interviewing technique.

Section B

Interviewers who are unfamiliar with the specification may wish to access the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs). These offer types of questions interviewers may wish to ask candidates, although these examples are intended as a guide. SAMs materials should not be adhered to very rigidly, as they do not usually elicit optimal responses. Only a tiny minority of interviewers simply asked questions from this published list. These questions may be very helpful for interviewers who do not know the candidates. Most recordings contained a significant range of suitable question types, allowing candidates to access their optimal range of structures and vocabulary. Interviewers were very skilled in eliciting excellent performances, thanks to targeted questions designed for the individual candidate.

Confident candidates are expected to respond to a broad range of questions across conversations B1 and B2. Most interviewers were equally mindful of the need to draw optimal performances from less confident candidates. It was pleasing to note that interviewers only tended to escalate the level towards more developmental areas if candidates were clearly able to proceed. Rephrasing and repeating of questions was handled with great skill and sensitivity.

Conduct of Examination

The vast majority of interviewers adhered to the requirements on timings, allowing candidates to access the whole time window available for each element.

In Section A, there were some centres where presentations tended to last for between twenty and thirty seconds, as opposed to the maximum one minute. Discussions were occasionally limited to about two minutes, as opposed to the maximum of three minutes. For both the presentation and discussion, there were instances where the maximum time limit was exceeded by a significant margin.

In Section B, each conversation should last about three minutes. In several instances, conversation 1 was brief, meaning that candidates were not able to access the full range of marks. In cases where Conversation 1 is too short, this must not be compensated by extending the second conversation beyond three minutes.

Utterances which take place beyond the prescribed limits <u>during any element of the speaking test</u> cannot be rewarded, as each element is timed independently.

The transition between two conversations was made clear by the interviewer during the vast majority of recordings. Candidate responses were usually most successful in cases where interviewers displayed interest and empathy. Candidates were keen to share their experiences with interviewers who were clearly not working from a predictable set of questions. This engendered more developed responses.

Centres adhered to the procedures concerning topics, in all but a few instances. There were a few cases where more than one conversation/discussion (in either section A or B) related to the same topic area. **Each topic area can only be**

covered once in any of the three parts of conversation – intentionally or unintentionally.

Administrative Matters

Virtually all centres continued to offer an excellent standard of administration. This consistency was greatly appreciated and facilitated the assessment process.

CDs/USBs were correctly labelled in most cases. Documentation was typically presented with excellent attention to detail. In some cases, centre documentation was incomplete. Pictures/Photographs relating to Section A were missing from a few parcels. These should be attached to the Candidate cover forms. Sub topic areas should be noted on the Candidate Cover Sheet. The current Specification offers the appropriate guidelines on pages 44-45. This section is particularly helpful for new centres.

Centres are kindly asked to verify recording quality and to check that CDs/USBs are not faulty. Nearly all interviewers were mindful to ensure that recordings were clearly audible. Checking the first part of each recording is recommended. Some recordings were too faint or virtually inaudible due to obtrusive background noise. The interviewer could always be heard very clearly, but candidate utterances were occasionally very faint. The microphone should always be placed in such a position that it favours the candidate rather than the interviewer.

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