

7. ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Results of Primary 3 English Language in TSA 2009

Primary 3 Assessment Design

The assessment tasks for P.3 English Language were based on the *Basic Competency (BC) Descriptors (Tryout Version) for English Language at the end of Key Stage 1 (Primary 3)* and the *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Primary 1 – 6) 1997*. The tasks covered the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, and were designed in accordance with the learning objectives in three interrelated strands: Interpersonal (IS), Knowledge (KS) and Experience (ES).

For the year 2009, the P.3 oral assessment consisted of 16 sub-papers as shown below in Table 7.1

Table 7.1 Composition of P.3 Speaking Sub-papers

Speaking Assessment				
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)			
L3-R-3-P3BC (Reading aloud)	3ES01 & 3ES03 2 (8)	3ES05 & 3ES07 2 (8)	3ES09 & 3ES11 2 (8)	3ES13 & 3ES15 2 (8)
L1-S-3-P3BC (Short answers)	3ES01 – 3ES04 4 (16)	3ES05 – 3ES08 4 (16)	3ES09 – 3ES12 4 (16)	3ES13 – 3ES16 4 (16)
L3-S-1-P3BC (Picture description – pronunciation)	3ES02 & 3ES04 2 (4)	3ES06 & 3ES08 2 (4)	3ES10 & 3ES12 2 (4)	3ES14 & 3ES16 2 (4)

P. 3 Speaking Tasks

Two components were designed for P.3 oral assessment. The first was ‘Reading Aloud and Expression of Personal Experiences’ (hereafter RA & PE) which required students to read aloud a text of approximately 35 – 40 words in length and then to answer a set of questions based on the theme of the text. Students were assessed on their reading fluency and response to the Oral Examiners’ questions. For this task, students were given two minutes to prepare for the assessment, one minute to complete the RA text and two minutes to complete the questions for PE. The second task was ‘Picture Description’ (hereafter PD) which required students to answer the Oral Examiner’s questions based on a single picture or series of smaller pictures. Students were assessed on the relevancy and response to the

questions as well as their pronunciation. For PD, students were given three minutes to study the question paper and two minutes to complete the Oral Examiners' questions.

Each component represented one half of the total sub-papers used for the oral assessment. RA & PE were comprised of sub-papers *3ES01, 3ES03, 3ES05, 3ES07, 3ES09, 3ES11, 3ES13, 3ES15* and PD comprised *3ES02, 3ES04, 3ES06, 3ES08, 3ES10, 3ES12, 3ES14, 3ES16*. A set of four sub-papers (two RA & PE tasks and two PD tasks) were alternately assessed in an assessment session. Sub-papers consisted of different topics: *Sally's School (3ES01), Prize-giving Ceremony (3ES02), Today's Homework (3ES03), Tom and His Homework (3ES04), My English Teacher (3ES05), Swimming Pool (3ES06), Recess (3ES07) Dog at the Beach (3ES08), My Home (3ES09), Going Out with Grandma (3ES10), Summer Holidays (3ES11), Family Visit to a Fun Park (3ES12), Chinese New Year (3ES13 & 3ES14), Getting There (3ES15)* and *A Day at the Country Park (3ES16)*. A total of four sessions were conducted over the two days of assessment held on 6 and 7 May 2009. Descriptions of the speaking tasks are provided in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 P.3 Speaking: Distribution of Tasks

Basic Competency	Task Description	Descriptor
L2-R-3-P3BC	Reading Aloud <i>3ES01, 3ES03, 3ES05, 3ES07, 3ES09, 3ES11, 3ES13, 3ES15</i>	Showing a basic understanding of short, simple and familiar texts by reading aloud the texts clearly and comprehensibly
L1-S-3-P3BC	Expression of Personal Experiences <i>3ES01, 3ES03, 3ES05, 3ES07, 3ES09, 3ES11, 3ES13, 3ES15</i>	Providing short answers to short and simple questions
L3-S-1-P3BC	Picture Description <i>3ES02, 3ES04, 3ES06, 3ES08, 3ES10, 3ES12, 3ES14, 3ES16</i>	Pronouncing simple and familiar words comprehensibly
L1-S-3-P3BC		Providing short answers to short and simple questions

Performance of P.3 Students in Speaking

Depending on the size of the school, a sample of either 12 or 24 students were randomly selected to participate in the oral assessment. No attempt was made to report results for schools in terms of the percent achieving basic competency in speaking because of the small sample size. However, a descriptive summary of the overall performance levels of students can be found in the 'General Comments on P.3 Student Performances' section.

Best performance of P.3 Students in TSA 2009

P.3 Speaking

Students with good speaking skills demonstrated their abilities in the following areas:

- In the 'Reading Aloud' component, students with the best performance were able to read the texts fluently and clearly with few errors in pronunciation. They could use appropriate pausing and intonation to enhance their presentation, for example, when reading a short dialogue: 'Who wants to play football? Oh, I do!' (3ES11). They also showed an awareness of their audience by maintaining good eye contact with the oral examiners.
- In 'Expression of Personal Experiences', students who performed well could provide relevant answers to most of the questions naturally and readily with some elaboration. They were able to give information about their personal experiences related to given topics. They could talk about their school (3ES01), what they usually did at recess (3ES07) and the festival they liked best (3ES13).
- In the 'Picture Description' component, students with good speaking skills were able to give a clear description of what they saw in the pictures. They spoke clearly with very few mistakes in pronunciation. Their answers to most of the questions were relevant with some elaborated responses. They could answer 'Why/Why not' questions and tell a short story (3ES04, 3ES08 & 3ES10).

General Comments on P.3 Student Performances

P.3 Speaking

- In the ‘Reading Aloud’ component, approximately half of the students could read a text fluently and clearly despite a few mistakes in pronunciation. Many students were able to read some words that required the use of phonic skills, such as ‘twelve’ (3ES01), ‘write’ (3ES03) and ‘black’ (3ES05). Some of them, however, had difficulty correctly pronouncing final consonant blend sounds in words like ‘test’ (3ES03) and ‘past’ (3ES07) and long vowel sounds in words, such as ‘Peak’ (3ES09), ‘beach’ (3ES11) and ‘beep’ (3ES15).
- For ‘Expression of Personal Experiences’, students normally could provide brief answers to the questions related to topics. Yet some students were hesitant or gave no responses even after being prompted by oral examiners. Students evidently performed better with questions that elicited specific information, such as ‘How many students are there in your class?’ (3ES01) and ‘Who is your English teacher?’ (3ES05). They did not respond as well to questions beginning with question words ‘How’ and ‘Why’, such as ‘How do you help at home?’ (3ES09), ‘Do you like the bus or MTR? Why?’ (3ES15).
- In the ‘Picture Description’ component, students were generally able to respond to the questions about the pictures. With familiar topics such as *Tom and His Homework* (3ES04) and *Chinese New Year* (3ES14), students could provide brief answers to most of the questions. However, some students had difficulty describing what a prize presenter was doing on stage (3ES02) and reasons for a girl feeling upset when a ball hit her in the head (3ES06).

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language Speaking at Primary 3 TSA 2007, 2008 and 2009

A comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of P.3 student performances in speaking in TSA 2007, 2008 and 2009 provides useful information on how teachers can help students improve. Table 7.3 summarises such a comparison.

Table 7.3 Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3 TSA 2007, 2008 and 2009

Year Skill	2007	2008	2009
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About half of the students were able to read a text fluently and clearly with very few or no pronunciation mistakes. • In 'Expression of Personal Experiences', some students provided relevant but brief answers to questions. Students with the best performance could provide elaboration to some questions. • In 'Picture Description', some students were able to provide brief answers to questions. Students with the best performance were able to provide elaboration to some questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For 'Reading Aloud', half of students were able to read fluently and clearly with few pronunciation mistakes. Words which required phonic skills were more challenging for some students. • For 'Expression of Personal Experiences', more than half of the students responded hesitantly to questions. Questions which elicited factual answers were generally more manageable than open-ended questions. • For 'Picture Description', nearly half of the students could provide relevant answers to most of the questions with little prompting. They could respond more naturally on topics such as <i>English Lesson</i> and <i>Going to School</i> but had more difficulty describing the feelings of the characters and providing an ending to the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 'Reading Aloud', about half of the students read the texts fluently and clearly despite a few errors in pronunciation. Some students had difficulty pronouncing final consonant blend sounds in certain words correctly. • Students continued to provide brief answers to the questions in 'Expression of Personal Experiences'. Students did not respond as well to questions beginning with 'How' and 'Why' but to those that elicited factual answers. • More than half the number of students was able to provide relevant answers to most questions in 'Picture Description'. Students could give more elaboration on familiar topics, such as <i>Tom and His Homework</i> and <i>Chinese New Year</i>.