Examiner commentary tasks

appear to be a little out of her depth. Again, the question is not fully understood and the response, though long, lacks clarity and is quite repetitive. The examiner tries to refocus the question, but again the candidate struggles to achieve clarity and the response fades out. She deals with the final question on the dangers of ambition with rather more success.

21 marks

CANDIDATE 8

Topic: Shopping

The candidate gives short but mainly clear responses to the examiner’s first few questions. There is some attempt at development when she introduces her visit to America, but other opportunities are missed, for example when the examiner prompts her about the greater choice there, she simply responds, ‘Yeah, yeah there is’ and when asked about the type of shops, the response is equally short – ‘a mixture of both.’ Structural weaknesses are evident in in phrases such as ‘can have talk.’ The examiner broadens out the topic and asks the candidate why she goes shopping. The response is relevant and a little more extended as the candidate explains her two main reasons. She responds quite fully to the next question about her own family’s shopping habits, but the lack of clarity of her expression makes some parts of her response difficult to understand. The candidate answers thoughtfully when asked whether it would be better to have more free things, although her answer is slightly off focus and at times her expression falters as she searches for the right words. She is quite clear in her answer to the question about fair trade but again she struggles to develop it any further. The examiner extends the point and the candidate responds with a touch of humour – ‘I never buy bananas,’ but then leaves it with the simple response ‘I think I would’ – another opportunity for development missed. The candidate is unable to supply an answer to the question about changing shopping habits though she responds quite well when asked about shopping online. She understands and supplies brief answers to the last few questions.

19 marks

CANDIDATE 9

Topic: Freedom to travel

The candidate copes quite well when describing his personal experience of travelling. It is noticeable from the start that the way he structures the language is sometimes faulty – ‘very freedom,’ ‘make up the American’ and ‘freedom style’ are clear examples. His pronunciation and intonation also sometimes make it difficult to understand fully what he is saying. However, his response is developed as he describes differences between America and China and gives some examples. He begins to stumble as he searches for what to say next and the examiner intervenes to move the conversation on to the places he visited and where he liked best. The candidate describes his favourite place, Princeton, fairly clearly but structural errors are still frequent, for example, ‘the people is study themselves,’ ‘study all the class.’ A clear response is given when asked whether we are free to travel anywhere, but when asked why he thinks people want to travel to different places he returns to the subject of going abroad to study. He

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Examiner commentary tasks

misses the opportunity here to develop the discussion by bringing in other reasons for travel. Notice also the limited vocabulary, in particular the repetition of the word ‘study’. Even when asked if his experience abroad was as he expected, he is unable to move away from the narrow focus of study. He copes quite well when asked why many people are moving to China but the structural errors and limited vocabulary are still very evident. When the examiner moves to more global points it seems that the candidate misunderstands slightly. For example, the examiner asks about airport security and why it takes so long at the airport but the candidate responds with reasons why people like to travel by plane. When the examiner clarifies and rephrases the question, the candidate gives a relevant response.

17 marks

Tasks
1 Students listen to each recording before they have access to the relevant examiner commentary. As they listen they note down, possibly in two columns, features which they regard as positive or negative. Listening with a critical ear to other speakers is a good bridge to being able to recognise how their own speaking skills might be improved. Students read the examiner commentary, ticking off points that they have noticed. Students then hear the recording again, and this time try to spot the features that have been noted in the commentary. A class discussion might follow.

2 In small groups, students undertake a close analysis of some of the commentaries. Ideally, they need to be able to pause and restart the recording. They take a list of features pointed out in the commentary and note where each occurs, whether they understand the observation, and thirdly whether or not they agree with it. Once individual notes have been made, the group discuss their findings and views. (See Worksheet 1)

3 Students choose one of the recorded samples and prepare their own commentary in the form of a short presentation. They might include examples of where they felt the candidate did particularly well or where he or she could have given a better response. They might also give some views on how they personally might have responded to some of the prompts. Here, they will be thinking critically about various aspects of the conversation, while at the same time practising their own speaking skills.

Using sample recordings in the classroom

Students are given the mark scheme and, working in pairs or small groups, they try to apply it to the sample recordings. This might be done before they have been shown the final marks. They might discuss in pairs or small groups whether or not they agree with the marks and then report to the class.

Top tips for students

If you are not sure you have understood the question, then it is quite acceptable to ask the examiner for clarification. This is definitely preferable to giving a response that is not relevant.