LanguageCert

LanguageCert Test of English (LTE)
Guide for Interlocutors

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Internal

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Document Revision History		
Version	**Date**	**Description of Change**
1.0	**14/11/2022**	Initial Version

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Process: Manage and Support Exams
ECS_M_34-1 LanguageCert Test of English (LTE) Guide for Interlocutors ver1.0 **|** 14/11/2022

About LanguageCert

LanguageCert is an Ofqual recognised Awarding Organisation responsible for the development and award of language qualifications. LanguageCert's mission is to offer high quality language qualifications that are truly fit-for-purpose for the markets/candidates they serve.

LanguageCert International ESOL Qualifications (Entry level, Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, corresponding to CEFR levels A1 to C2) are regulated by Ofqual.

Process: Manage and Support Exams
ECS_M_34-1 LanguageCert Test of English (LTE) Guide for Interlocutors ver1.0 | 14/11/2022

1 Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to provide information and guidance for Interlocutors on all aspects of the LanguageCert Test of English (LTE) Speaking exam. It should be read thoroughly prior to the commencement of new exam sessions and retained as a reference source for any problems or queries which may arise.

The guide will explain the administrative responsibilities of the Interlocutor by describing what is required before, during, and after each examination. It also provides guidance and advice on how to conduct each part of the examination.

Further information and guidance on all aspects of the LanguageCert Test of English (LTE) Speaking examinations can be found in the LanguageCert Test of English (LTE) Speaking Qualification Handbook.

1.2 The Role of the Interlocutor

The Interlocutor is responsible for conducting the LanguageCert Test of English (LTE) Speaking examinations. They elicit the spoken performance of the candidate by asking questions or setting up speaking tasks using the scripted *Interlocutor Framework*.

All recorded live exams are sent directly to LanguageCert where they are marked centrally by Marking Examiners who do not know the candidates. **Interlocutors do not examine or assess the candidate's performance**.

To ensure all candidates have an equal chance of giving their best performance, the examinations must be conducted fairly and consistently and in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down by LanguageCert.

1.3   Key Responsibilities of the Interlocutor

The Interlocutor must

- be fully familiar with the contents of *the LTE Guide for Interlocutors*,

- manage the interaction in the exam and facilitate the candidate's performance,

- be completely familiar with the scripted *Interlocutor Framework* for the LTE Speaking exam and deliver it as accurately as possible,

- adjust own speed of delivery as is appropriate,

- keep to the prescribed timings for all parts of the exam,

- ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and given an equal opportunity to speak,

- conduct the exam in accordance with LanguageCert regulations,

- ensure mobile phones are switched off during the speaking tests,

- ensure the security of examination material at all times,

- record spoken examinations in digital format,

- ensure that all the administration connected with the live exam recordings is accurately carried out,

- ensure all necessary procedures are in place to prevent malpractice during the examination,

- be professional in their dress attire and behaviour,

- undertake to offer the services set out above within the specified times and in accordance with LanguageCert's procedures.

2   Interlocutor Responsibilities Before, During and After the Exam

2.1   Preparing for the examination: Required Facilities and Equipment

The following must be available for each exam session:

Interlocutor's Room

This room must be suitable for the interviews to be conducted, quiet and with as little echo as possible. Depending on the mode of delivery of the exam, the room must contain a table and two chairs for the Interlocutor and the candidate, preferably arranged on two adjacent sides of the table to avoid a 'confrontational' situation. The room must also be checked to ensure the lighting and temperature are conducive to a comfortable exam environment. Posters which may be relevant to the examination must be covered or removed.

Reference Material

A current copy of the *LTE Guide for Interlocutors* should be available for reference.

Examining recording equipment

You must ensure that the voice recorder is working properly. The equipment should be tested. Adjustments must be made if the sound quality is unsatisfactory.

2.2   Preparing for the Examination: Papers and Equipment Set up

Exam Paper

Before the examination session begins, you will be handed the Exam Paper to be used for the exam session(s).

You must read the whole paper carefully and familiarise yourself fully with:

- the contents
- the scripted Interlocutor Framework
- the questions
- the subjects covered
- the timings for each section of the examination

You should also use this time to prepare or think about any additional questions or comments that may be required, depending on the candidate's comments or replies. Make sure you check any unknown vocabulary prior to the exam.

2.3   During and After the Examination: Interlocutor's administrative responsibilities

When you are satisfied that the equipment is working properly, the microphones have been suitably positioned and the candidate is ready to start, the following procedure **<u>MUST</u>** be followed:

1. Switch on the voice recorder

2. Say: 'Hello. My name's (give your full name). And you are (give candidate's full name), right?'.

3. Wait for the candidate to respond.

4. Say: 'Thank you. Can you spell your surname for me, please?'.

5. Wait for the candidate to respond.

6. Say: 'Thank you. Where are you from?'.

7. Wait for the candidate to respond.

8. Say: 'Thank you. Exam begins. LanguageCert Test of English, Speaking, A1-C2 examination, (give the date)'.

9. Proceed with Part 1, then Part 2, and then Part 3 of the exam. Follow the script closely and avoid paraphrasing.

10. Leave the voice recorder running for the duration of the exam.

11. At the end of Part 3 (the end of the exam), say: 'Thank you, (give candidate's name). That is the end of the exam.'

12. Switch off the voice recorder until the next candidate is ready to begin.

13. Avoid making any comments on the candidate's performance.

14. Repeat the above process for each candidate.

3   The LTE Speaking Examination

3.1   Length of the exam

The length of each part in the exam ranges. It is essential that you keep to the prescribed timings for each part of the exam. This is to ensure that the exam is delivered consistently around the world. The table below shows the breakdown of the timings for each part:

Part	Time Duration	Total Exam Duration
Part 1	2 mins – 3 mins 30s	
Part 2	3 mins – 4 mins 30s	10 – 14 mins
Part 3	5 mins – 6 mins	

3.2   Prescribed Timings

For accurate test results and fairness to all candidates, no more than the maximum time duration should be given for each part of the test and the preparation timings of all tests should be kept to the prescribed timing. This will assist the Marking Examiner to gain a global understanding of the candidate's language skills and to give an accurate assessment of a candidate's speaking ability.

Remember to **start the time keeping** for the preparation time from the moment you finish saying:

'You now have thirty seconds to write some notes to help you.' (30 seconds)

After the preparation time, follow the interlocutor's script to prompt the candidate to start talking.

To avoid finishing abruptly, an interlocutor can politely interrupt a candidate to keep to the prescribed overall timing of a Part.

3.3 Description of the Three Parts of the LTE Speaking Exam

Part	Focus	Task
Part 1	Giving personal information	• The candidate confirms and spells his/her name. • The candidate states his/her country of origin. • The candidate answers a variety of independent questions aimed at eliciting personal information, ideas or views.
Part 2	Exchanging information to perform a communicative task	• The candidate and the interlocutor interact in a short discussion to plan, arrange or decide something using a series of prompts. • The candidate and interlocutor both have the same prompts based on a variety of topics. The discussion might require the speakers to rank or prioritise, to analyse, or to imagine and hypothesise. During the discussion, the candidate can demonstrate an ability to express preferences and opinions, to expand and give examples, to justify opinions and to challenge the interlocutor if they disagree.
Part 3	Speaking about a selected topic	• The candidate is given a topic and 30 seconds of preparation time. • The candidate talks about the topic for about 2 minutes. • The candidate is asked follow-up questions on the same context. The difficulty of the questions ranges from simple to complex and advanced.

Part 1

The aim of Part 1 is to settle the candidate and to ask a variety of questions aimed at eliciting personal information, ideas or views. After asking for the spelling of the candidate's surname and his/her nationality, you should ask a selection of questions. The questions you ask will vary from candidate to candidate. However, you should try to ask at least 3 questions.

Some of the questions are followed by brackets prompting the candidate to elaborate. The interlocutor should wait until the candidates have finished their response to the initial question before using the prompt from the bracket. The interlocutor may ask the candidate to elaborate or justify any of their responses, as long as the remaining time for the part allows it.

Giving personal information is likely to be the area which is most familiar, and candidates' answers may well sound rehearsed. However, long and obviously prepared speeches should be politely interrupted.

Part 2

The focus of Part 2 is to test how well the candidate can exchange information with you to perform a communicative task. You and the candidate ask and answer questions to find out each other's opinions. The important aspect of Part 2 is the quality of the language of discussion and not completion of the task.

You and the candidate both have the same written prompts based on a variety of topics which may also include contemporary issues. You and the candidate need to engage in a discussion to:

- Perform a specific task and/or

- Reach an agreement and/or

- Persuade each other to your point of view.

During the discussion, the candidate needs to demonstrate an ability to express preferences and opinions, to expand and give examples, to justify opinions and to challenge you if you disagree. The discussion might require you both to rank or prioritise things, to analyse, or to imagine and hypothesise.

Before you start the exam, look at Part 2 carefully and make sure you understand what the purpose of the task is. You and the candidate have the same input, which may be:

- A question or statement with several aspects for discussion

- A spidergram with topic or question at the centre

- A list with several items for ranking or prioritising

- A list with several items for discussing and eliminating

- A list with several items for discussing and hypothesising

- A list with several items to be discussed, planned or finalised

- Question or survey results requiring discussion.

The topics are taken from the Topics Lists in the LTE Qualification Handbook and do not require specialist knowledge of any academic or technical subject. You and the candidate are, however, required to have a grasp of contemporary issues. It is not essential for the task to be completed within the time limit, but you should both aim to do so.

Part 3

The aim of Part 3 is to give the candidate an opportunity to talk at greater length on a topic which you select from a choice of two. Range, fluency and the ability to organise and manage the discourse, are all features which the Marking Examiner will be assessing here.

Use any knowledge you have about candidates to choose an appropriate topic for them. This is their opportunity to talk at greater length, so obviously it is better if they are interested in and feel comfortable with their topic. Having said that, an able candidate should be able to perform well with any topic appropriate to the level.

Use any knowledge you have of personal circumstances to avoid giving them a potentially upsetting topic, and make sure that the topic you choose is not one which has already been covered in Part 2.

Candidates are given preparation time to gather their thoughts and prepare themselves before speaking. After the candidate has spoken on their own for the required amount of time, the interlocutor must ask all three follow-up questions, in the order they appear. The follow-up questions should not be skipped as these range from simple to complex and advanced, and will allow candidates to showcase higher-level speaking competency.

4 Specific Guidance and Advice for Each Part of the Exam

The following information contains guidance and support for interlocutors for each part. This information should be read together with the appropriate speaking practice paper to gain a thorough understanding in conducting a speaking test which meets the required standards.

You can refer to our website www.languagecert.org to download Practice Papers.

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Part	Focus	Interlocutor Role and Responsibilities
Part 1 **(2 mins – 3 mins 30s)**	Giving personal information	1. Ask for the spelling of the candidate's surname and his/her nationality - Follow interlocutor framework. 2. Ask a selection of questions - 3 questions and elaboration within time limit. 3. Make a suitable brief comment after the candidate's response, e.g. 'I see', 'Aha', 'Really?' etc. 4. Do not develop the questions into a discussion. 5. Ask for more information if answers are too short - "Can you tell me more about…?". 6. Say '*Thank you*' after the candidate has finished responding to the final questions or after a maximum of 3 ½ minutes and move on to Part 2.
Part 2 **(3 mins – 4 mins 30s)**	Exchanging information to perform a communicative task	1. Read the Interlocutor Framework. 2. Give the candidate 20 seconds to read the task you have handed over. 3. Give the candidate time to ask questions and to make suggestions. 4. Ask questions and (briefly) give your opinion to move the conversation forward. 5. Feel free to disagree with the candidate but make it non-confrontational. 6. Try to reach some form of agreement within the time allowed. Don't worry if the task isn't fully completed within the time allowed. 7. After a maximum of 4 ½ minutes, draw the exchange to a close by saying '*Thank you*' and retrieving the candidate's copy of Part 2. Move on to Part 3.
Part 3 **(5 mins – 6 mins)**	Speaking about a selected topic	1. Read the Interlocutor Framework, announce topic and hand over a pencil/pen and paper for notes. 2. Withdraw eye contact while the candidate is thinking. 3. After 30 seconds look back up and signal that it is time to begin by saying '(Candidate's name), *please start.* 4. Allow the candidate to talk for the required time (about 2 minutes) and don't interrupt. 5. Ask all 3 follow-up questions after 2 minutes of uninterrupted talk. 6. After a maximum of 6 minutes, signal the end of the exam by saying '*Thank you*, (give candidate's name). *That is the end of the exam.*'

4.1   Language for Initiating and Responding for Each Part of the Exam

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PART 1

Introducing a topic.

- *'Now, the first question.'*
- *'Next question.'*
- *'Second question. '*
- *'Now…'*
- *'Let's move on to the second/third question.'*
- *'Finally, X.'*

Moving to another question after it has been repeated and the candidate still does not understand it. Remember not to rephrase the question.

- *'All right, here is another question…'*
- *'Let's move on to another question…'*

To elicit more information if answers are too short and/or you can use gestures.

- *'Can you tell me more about…?*
- *'Is there anything you can tell me about…?'*
- *'So, Mary is your best friend. Why?'*
- *'Oh, you really like football. Tell me more about this sport.'*

You can make a suitable brief comment after a candidate's response, but do not develop the questions into a discussion.

- *'I see,'*
- *'Aha, really?'*
- *'OK'*
- *'Interesting.'*

PART 2

Initiate the exchange of information in various ways which should encourage the candidate to do so too. Give the candidate enough time to form questions but be prepared to prompt/support if necessary.

- *'What do you think about… ?'*

- *'I'm not sure about … What do you think?'*

- *'… may (not) be a good idea as…. Do you agree?'*

- *'How about… ?'*

- *'I agree with you and it would help if …. Do you think this is a good idea?'*

You can disagree with a candidate's opinion in a way which does not affect their confidence.

- *'That's an interesting idea, but I think that…'*

- *'Well, we could do that, but what about… instead?'*

Ask open-ended questions which help to stimulate a discussion.

PART 3

If a candidate 'dries up' during the uninterrupted talk, wait for 5 - 7 seconds before you say,

- *'Can you tell me a bit more about …'*

If they still do not have any ideas, then you can use the follow-up questions. Do not ask any unscripted questions.

5 Interlocutor Performance

5.1 What if things go wrong?

Problem/Issue	Solution
The recording equipment breaks down	Request a replacement immediately and start the exam again with the new recorder. Make sure the candidate doesn't leave the room and reassure them that this will not affect their exam.
There is too much external noise to continue the exam	Try to sort out the noise problem if you can. Don't stop the recorder. Briefly explain the situation so the Marker can understand what has happened. If the noise cannot be stopped, you will have to cancel the exam and the candidate will have to take the exam at another time.
Someone comes into the room during the exam	Keep the recorder running, ask the person politely to leave the room, and resume from where you were interrupted.
One of you has a coughing or sneezing fit	Keep the recorder running, wait until the situation has passed, and resume from where the exam was interrupted.
You realise you have left out a Part	Reassure the candidate that it will not affect the assessment, continue, and do the omitted Part at the end of Part 3. Explain clearly what you are doing on the recording.
The candidate speaks too quietly	Ask them to speak up and make sure they're close enough to the recorder. Repeat the instruction if necessary as it's essential that the Markers can hear the candidate. Do not stop the recording.
The candidate does not understand and remains silent	Most of the time, it is enough to repeat the question or situation. In Part 1, if the candidate still does not understand, move on to the next question or situation. In Part 3, you are permitted to explain the meaning of the topic if the candidate does not understand. If a candidate still does not understand and remains silent after 5 - 7 seconds, then move to another follow-up question.
In Parts 2 and 3, during the preparation time, the candidate asks the meaning of a topic	If during the preparation time a candidate states they do not understand the topic, you can briefly explain the topic - no extra preparation time should be given.
The candidate does not use their preparation time in Part 3	Ask the candidate if they understand that the 30 seconds can be used for preparation. If they don't want to use the time for preparation, then you should allow them to start. Follow the interlocutor's script to start Part 3.
The candidate starts talking about a different topic	In Part 3, allow them to continue as normal. You should wait for an appropriate pause to get them back on track.
The candidate dries up during the uninterrupted talk	After waiting between 5 - 7 seconds, encourage them to say more by using hand gestures and body language or say, 'What else can you tell me about…?' If they continue to struggle with ideas, use the follow-up questions to stimulate a discussion.
The candidate's answers are too brief	In Parts 1 and 3, encourage them to say more by using hand gestures and body language or say, 'What else can you tell me about…?'

The candidate's answers are too long	Interrupt the candidate politely at an appropriate pause and say, 'Thank you'.

5.2 Do's and Don'ts

The following tips provide advice on how to make sure you adhere to the attributes of a good Interlocutor:

DON'T stop the recording	Never stop the recording of a candidate once you have started. If there are unexpected interruptions such as a fire bell ringing or someone accidentally entering the Exam Room, leave the machine running and allow for the required extra time. This will not prejudice the assessment of the candidate. On no account should you stop the machine in order to speak to the candidate. Such an action might invalidate the exam.
DON'T distract the candidate by looking at the clock too much	Try and be as discreet as possible when checking the timing of the exam using your clock or stopwatch. A quick glance should be enough to make sure you are keeping to the prescribed timings. A good place for a clock would be on the wall behind the candidate. A stopwatch or digital recorder with a timing display should be placed discreetly on the desk.
DO be friendly and encouraging	Smile at the candidate when they come in and indicate where you want them to sit. Try and make the exam experience as comfortable as possible using positive body language.
DON'T let the candidate talk too quietly	Tell the candidate to speak up if the voice level is low or quiet. Do not turn off the recording equipment when you say this. If the exam Marker cannot hear the candidate properly, it may affect their assessment.
DON'T dominate	Don't talk too much (except in the parts of the exam where it is required). You can respond and contribute where appropriate, but you must give the candidate every opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.
DON'T rush the candidate	Some candidates need a few seconds to think of what they want to say, especially at the lower levels. Give them the time to do so. If they remain silent after 5 - 7 seconds, then be prepared to interrupt appropriately depending on the Part and Task type.
DON'T provide positive feedback	Avoid saying 'fine', 'good', 'well done', 'excellent' etc. as this might be interpreted as a comment on whether the candidate has passed or not.
DO ask open questions	In Part 2, try to ask questions that begin with What, Why, Which and How. They encourage the candidate to respond with longer answers. Questions that begin with 'Can you tell me about…' also work well.
DON'T ask closed questions	Questions that start with Is, Are, Was, Do, Did, Should, Could etc. typically require one word answers, and should be avoided as they don't allow the candidate to develop the interaction.
DO keep to the Interlocutor Framework	LanguageCert LTE Speaking exams are held all over the world, every day. It's important to give all candidates a fair and equal chance. By keeping to the framework, we ensure worldwide consistency. Keeping to the framework also ensures maximum speaking time is given to the candidate. Practise delivering the framework in a natural way, so that it doesn't sound like you are reading from a script.

DON'T rephrase the questions	If you rephrase the question, it may make the candidate more confused. It also uses up valuable time and creates an unequal exam among candidates. If the candidate doesn't understand a question, repeat it. If they still don't understand, move on to the next question.
DON'T correct errors	Your job as an Interlocutor is to try to elicit as much language out of the candidate as possible. You are not responsible for assessing their language.

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5.3   Assessment of Interlocutor performance

There are certain attributes and key performance indicators that LanguageCert requires from all Interlocutors. Recordings are regularly audited to monitor Interlocutor performance around the world.

The following table shows the criteria used to measure Interlocutor performance.

Criteria	Key Performance Indicator
Language	Language production accurate and appropriate.
	Language and speech rate appropriate.
	Accent intelligible in an international context.
Framework	Fully familiar with scripted framework.
	Adheres to interlocutor framework.
	Natural delivery of interlocutor script.
Attitude	Polite and patient at all times.
	Suitably encouraging and reassuring when necessary.
	Refrains from commenting on candidate's performance.
	Refrains from making inappropriate comments.
	Listens to the candidate and shows interest in responses
Elicitation	Adequate samples of language elicited from the candidate.
	Interlocutor/candidate interaction in Part 2
	Uses open-ended questions.
	Refrains from talking too much
Timing	Keeps to prescribed timing for each part.
	Keeps to prescribed timing overall.
Other	Quality of recorded audio file.

To ensure all tests are standardized and candidates receive the same speaking opportunities, interlocutors are monitored and feedback is given to help them improve their interlocutor performance.

A sample of the Interlocutor feedback form can be found in this document as **Appendix B**.

Each Key Performance Indicator is given one of three ratings: *To Standard*, *Needs to Improve*, or *Below Standard*.

The table on the form explains what is included in each criterion.

The overall score for an Interlocutor is used to determine if further training is required to improve performance. In cases where the performance is rated as *Below Standard*, the Interlocutor will not be permitted to conduct further spoken exams.

Appendix A – Instructions for Exam Recording Device

1. While the voice recorder is turned off, press and hold the POWER button ( ).

Notice: If the recorder is stopped for 5 minutes or longer it goes into standby mode and the display shuts off. To exit standby mode and turn on the display, press any button.

2. Slide the REC switch ( ) on to record the introduction to the test session. The indicator light will turn red.

3. Record: 'LanguageCert LTE Speaking, (date). Start of examination session.' Slide REC switch down. The red light will go off.

4. Number 1/1 should appear on top of the screen indicating that the recording has been successful. Please call the supervisor and check the quality of the recording together by pressing the PLAY/PAUSE button ( ).

5. Slide REC switch on before you start each interview. A red light comes up confirming that you are recording. Slide REC switch down when you finish the interview. The light will go off. Number 2/2 should appear on the screen. Ask the candidate to stay in the room and check that the recording has been successful. Press the PLAY button and listen up to the point of the interview when the candidate spells her name. Press PAUSE. The candidate can leave the examination room.

    ● Repeat the above process for all candidates.

6. Once the exam session is finished, press the POWER button to turn the recorder off.

Appendix B – Interlocutor Feedback Form

INTERLOCUTOR FEEDBACK FORM	
Recording Date:	Interlocutor's name:
Monitoring Date:	Feedback provided by:
Interviews monitored:	

Criteria	To standard	Needs to Improve	Below standard
Language			
Framework			
Attitude			
Elicitation			
Timing			
Quality of recorded audio file			
Overall Evaluation			

Key Performance Indicators

Language	Attitude
Language production accurate and appropriate	Polite and patient at all times
Language appropriate to the level being examined	Suitably encouraging and reassuring when necessary
Speech rate appropriate (not too fast or slow)	Refrains from commenting on candidate's performance
Accent intelligible in an international context	Refrains from making inappropriate comments
	Listens to the candidate and shows interest in responses
Framework	**Elicitation**
Fully familiar with scripted framework	Adequate samples of language elicited from the candidate
Adheres to interlocutor framework	Interlocutor/candidate interaction in Parts 2 and 3
Natural delivery of interlocutor script	Uses open-ended questions
	Refrains from talking too much

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