

Using Discussion Circles to Improve Oral Literacy Effectiveness

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Abstract

In this study, we aimed to examine the effectiveness of discussion circles on students' oral communication skills, which involved the students' practice of Socratic questioning, critical thinking and verbal communication in small groups. Qualitative analysis was used in the form of the transcription of pre- and post-interviews with students, along with a student survey at the end of the study. The study aimed to draw a co-relation between oral literacy and small-group discussion in the classroom.

Introduction

The authors of this study were aware of the importance of effective communication in and outside of academic settings, keeping in mind that one of the key outcomes planned for Secondary School students is for them to be able to appreciate diverse views and communicate effectively (Ministry of Education, 2015). There is also an increasing emphasis on oracy in the GCE 'O' Level English Language syllabus in Singapore with oracy constituting 20 per cent of the English Language paper. As such, there is a need for students to be proficient and fluent in their oracy skills in order to sustain a conversation in the English Language Oral Examination and, of course, to communicate effectively in their daily lives. This research project sets out to investigate whether the use of discussion circles in the English Language classroom can improve the oral literacy of students.

Corden (2001) and Nystrand (1996) point out that lessons today still tend to be dominated by teacher talk in many classrooms and that unless oral literacy skills are taught explicitly, students make only slight changes to their language when they have to demonstrate learning. Furthermore, Zwiers and Crawford (2011) lament that present talking activities are used mainly to check the learning of facts and content rather than to probe learning or deepen understanding.

Zwiers and Crawford (2011) further emphasise the need for critical thinking skills for the 21st century, and for academic conversations which can help to enhance highly important but under-assessed skills and qualities. They argue that children especially learn language at their best when they are immersed in it and when they use it for authentic purposes and that the skills of listening, talking and negotiating meaning allow students to practise and hone their oracy skills when they are actively engaging one another in conversation.

Ketch (2005) claims that conversations help readers develop the vocabulary, syntax, background knowledge, and thinking skills that authors of texts expect readers to have. Conversations also enable

students to practise reading strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, clarifying, connecting and interpreting.

Lastly, Zwiers and Crawford (2011) assert that practising conversation and dialogue fosters argumentation, group discussion, listening and the valuing of talk and clarity skills, which are essential to both a student's professional and personal development.

Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt (2008) and Ewens (2000) seem to agree, arguing that the use of class discussions promotes active learning and develops problem solving and critical thinking skills because of their focus on higher-level reflective thinking. The processing of information through the use of discussion circles can be improved through a traditional lecture. However, Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt (2008) caution in their study that the effectiveness of classroom discussions is also dependent on the level of active participation by the students, saying that those who choose to volunteer and participate most frequently are those participants who will obtain the best results.

Having read the literature, which seemed to focus majorly on the role of discussion in the classroom (peer-to-peer talk), we were eager to investigate whether the added role of discussion circles (four to five students bouncing ideas back and forth) might have similar benefits for our students. In Singapore, educators share the same focus on critical-thinking and 21st-century skills development, and unfortunately also share the same shortcomings such as a large amount of teacher-talk in the classroom and a lack of social awareness in our students. Through reading about the successes of others, we were intrigued as to whether changing our pedagogy in the classroom might result in achieving the same outcomes.

Methodology

Sample

Ten students from each of four Secondary Three classes formed the intervention and control groups. We planned for an accurate representation of each class profile by having three High-ability (HA), four Middle-ability (MA) and three Low-ability (LA) students. Out of the four classes, two were from the Integrated Programme (IP) track and the other two classes were from the O level Programme (OP) track. The IP programme has a different curriculum from the OP programme – the IP girls do not have to sit for the GCE O levels at the end of their four years of secondary school, but head directly to a Junior College to complete their A levels, while the OP girls sit for the O level examinations at the end of their secondary school education. One English Language teacher taught the two IP classes and the other teacher taught the two OP classes. Both teachers had five years of teaching experience. The students were selected based on a pre-test to ensure that the sample did not skew towards any ability group.

Data-Collection

The 10 students from each class were administered a one-to-one Oral Literacy pre-test with a teacher, which was recorded on video. Questions asked were modelled after the GCE 'O' level examination rubrics (Annex A), specifically focussing on the Spoken Interaction component, which assessed students' articulation and pronunciation, development of content, as well as their fluency and pacing, amongst other criteria. This was done to provide a benchmark for both teachers to evaluate students using the video footage. To ensure inter-rater reliability, a standardisation was conducted between the two assessors, who scored the participants independently before calibrating and arriving at an agreed score out of 20 marks. After the intervention, a post-test was conducted with the same assessment procedure and criteria. The sample questions for the pre- and post-tests are listed below:

Pre-test:

1. *What is your goal in life?*
2. *What are two issues you would like to solve in society today?*

Post-test:

1. *Choose three words to describe yourself.*
2. *How have your views changed towards a social issue?*

After the intervention, the students' pre-test scores were compared to their post-test scores to see if there was any variance.

We also administered a qualitative survey form (post-intervention questionnaire) to the entire class of students to find out the impact of the intervention on the affective domains of the students such as confidence, and the enjoyment of learning.

The video recordings of the oral literacy tests were fully transcribed in order to look at the quality of student responses based on the four categories of Content, Clarity, External Support and Internal Support, which were the criteria distilled from the O level examination rubrics. Our objective was to look for variances in the quality of these categories between both pre- and post-tests.

Intervention

The classroom intervention was planned for 10 lessons over the duration of one school term (about one lesson per week) for all students in the IP and OP classes. During each lesson, 15 minutes was assigned for students to engage in discussion circles in groups.

Before the intervention, students were told to prepare 10 newspaper articles and to be ready to share their thoughts based on the following discussion prompts:

1. What is the topic, subject matter? (Briefly summarize the article.)
2. Why/How is it relevant to our society's context? (Pick out examples from the article.)
3. Why do I find this article important? (State why you were interested in it in the first place.)

During the intervention, students were given around three minutes each to share their thoughts on the newspaper article with the rest of their group mates. Thereafter, the rest of their group members were given around one minute to ask follow-up questions or provide comments. Group members took turns like this until every member of the group had finished their sharing.

Both the intervention and data-collection activities were recorded by video and audio equipment. Consent was obtained from parents prior to the start of this study.

Results

Transcription of Oral Literacy Pre- and Post-Tests

To assess whether students had improved after the intervention, we adopted four assessment criteria that were based on the 'O' level examination rubrics, which were distilled down to:

1. **Content** refers to the ability of students to formulate thoughtful responses to the question prompt and then successfully elaborate on their opinions.
2. **Clarity** refers to the mechanics of their oral fluency in terms of being concise, the extent to which they used hesitation devices as fillers and how well they articulated specific words.
3. **External Support** refers to the frequency of teacher prompting or support provided to help

the students to sustain their responses.

4. **Internal Support** refers to the ability of the students to rely on their own scheme of knowledge or draw from personal anecdotal evidence to support their stand.

Results of Transcription of Oral Literacy Pre- and Post-Tests

Content

In relation to the quality of **Content**, OP students showed more improvement in the citation of specific examples, providing sustained elaboration and relevant examples after the intervention, as compared with the IP students.

The excerpt below illustrated that OP1 was only able to state her goal without any explanation in the pre-test:

***OP1 Pre-test:** Firstly since I'm only in sec 3 now, my goal for now will be to do well in O-levels and move on to a good JC.*

However, in the post-test, OP1 was able to elaborate her opinions with more specific examples and a justification using a personal anecdote:

***OP1 Post-test:** But recently I have become friends with one of the people from the Middle East and it has really changed my mindset on them because not all of them are terrorists and majority of them are really nice and they don't really support ISIS and what they're doing.*

In the case of the IP students, it was observed that they were consistent in their performance before and after the intervention, i.e. they were able to substantiate their arguments with relevant examples. This is probably due to the fact that IP students had a better **Content** baseline to begin with.

The excerpts from both the pre- and post-tests below showed that the IP students were able to provide personal responses with elaboration in both instances:

***IP1 Pre-test:** Personally my goal in life is to make my family proud by getting a good job which provides a good salary and I'm happy doing that particular job. Although, my family would also like me to get a good job with more pay, they also want me to feel superior in a sense. So for example, if I were to become a doctor in the future, there is this sense of superiority that erm ... I am more skilled.*

***IP1 Post-test:** I'm quite insecure about many things be it studies, friendships or relationships. Firstly studies. For example when I see my peers working so hard and doing well in tests, I get worried. Also I feel a sense of apprehension when people ask me for help due to my competitive nature and worry if they would do better than me. Secondly I feel insecure about friendships and relationships. For instance, there's always an underlying competition with my sister in terms of academics.*

We can conclude then that the intervention had a larger impact on the OP students as compared to the IP students in terms of improving their quality of **Content**. Again, it should not suggest that IP students had poor **Content** knowledge. Rather, the intervention proved to be ineffective at raising the initial level.

Clarity

In terms of clarity, both OP and IP students showed little improvement from the pre-test to the post-test scores. Their use of hesitation devices and the amount of filler-time used to form their sentences was consistent between the two tests.

IP2 Pre-test: *What is my goal in life? ... (3.5 secs). I think it's just we erm I really hope that I can do like something that I like, and then like enjoy my life as much as possible. And then erm like when I do things just try not to disappoint myself because everything is just like onetime thing because once it's done that mean it's done. Ya so I will just try to put my best effort into what I do ya. And then erm I also hope that like I will spend as much time with my family as possible because as I grow up, I will just like stay further and further away from my parents. So I just want to treasure the time being with my parents for now, and then in future not matter how busy I am like I will always try to like spend some time for them because we are still a family after all. Ya.*

IP2 Post-test: *Hmm... (1 sec) I guess the first thing that, I think the first word will be patience because like when I do things I will like ... (2.5 secs) I won't get, I won't get very I don't how to say like I don't do things in a rush and if I cannot do it then I will just keep on trying. I won't get angry or something like even though I will get disappointed in myself but I will just try to like calm myself down and like do things like step by step. Ya and then ... (1.5 secs) that's all. And then another word ... (2 secs) another word would be kind? Ya because I always find like I always find it very ... (1.5 secs) happy when I help so ya I will just try to like see whether if other people need help then I will just approach them. Ya and then ... (4 secs) another word would be ... (8 secs) I don't really know. I only can think of two. ... (4.5 secs) Encouraging? Ya like because when I see my friends that are down or anything then I will like ... (4 secs) em put myself in their shoes and then like think of their problems that they face, and then from their point of view then I'll encourage them like, "Oh maybe you should try the other way instead of this." Ya.*

Though IP students provided longer answers, there was no notable reduction in the frequency of hesitation devices ('Ya' / 'like' / 'erm') nor the length of pauses (bracketed) in their pre- and post-test responses. In fact, in the IP2 post-test, the response became *more* convoluted in terms of **Clarity**.

A similar trend can be said for the OP students:

OP2 Pre-test: *... (6 secs) Discrimination ... (2.5 secs) like cleaners and ... (2 secs) elderly. Like when you see them fail and everything like you will judge them based on their looks and everything. Ya and er ... (22 secs) can say how you can help ... (4 secs) we have to learn to ... (3 secs) control what we're thinking and not be so quick to judge people. ... (3 secs) Ya la it's like a self-learning thing, but we can learn from others as well.*

OP2 Post-test: *... (3 secs) Poverty. I've lived in a household which is middle-class and I'm not really exposed to a lot of people experiencing poverty because I am very sheltered and I don't ... (2 secs) therefore I don't know how to sympathise with them. But now that I'm grown up and I see all these people suffering from poverty and ... (2 secs) erm I really sympathise with them and er ... (2 secs) I learnt that ... (2 secs) there are many issues that we do not see and once we know of it we must act on it and em help to eliminate the issue.*

For OP students, there are reductions in the hesitation times from the pre-test to the post-test, but their frequency and use of hesitation devices remain the same.

This lack of improvement for both the IP and OP groups might suggest that the intervention might not be an effective tool to improve the mechanics of speech, even when students were given sufficient time to respond to each question (three to five minutes). As Zwiers and Crawford (2011) pointed out earlier, the use of discussion circles might be a more effective tool for the generation of ideas (**Content**), with articulation and pronunciation, pacing and rhythm and overall fluency (**Clarity**) remaining unchanged from the pre-test to the post-test.

External Support

From the pre-test, it was observed that the majority of the students in both groups attempted to clarify their doubts by seeking **External Support** from their examiner (underlined in the texts below). In the post-test, however, we saw a decrease in the number of such queries:

OP3 Pre-test:

Student: ... (6 secs) My goal in life is to be happy. ... (6 secs) Do I just keep talking?

Teacher: Yes, please elaborate.

Student: Because because we live such a stressful life and we have so many commitments in our lives so if we don't learn to relax and be joyful for the little things, then we will find ourselves very unhappy with every single little thing.

OP3 Post-test:

Teacher: Pick a social issue and elaborate on how it has changed your mindset.

Student: I think that one social issue that has caught my attention is animal abuse because being an animal lover, I am quite concerned for the safety of animals. However recently on the news, we have often seen reports of er people even as young as teenagers abusing animals and causing a lot of harm to them. Hence it has caused me to be more aware of this issue and help me to understand more about it. And I learnt that ... (2 secs) even for animals they have feelings. So we shouldn't treat them like objects but take good care of them, and if we see stray animals along the streets, if we do not know what to do with them, we could call the ... (2 secs) animal shelter so that they can take in these animals and look after them.

In the OP3 pre-test, the student used external clarifying questions like 'Do I just keep talking?' to clarify whether his answer was sufficiently elaborated on. OP3 also relied on teacher prompts ('Yes, please elaborate') in order to gauge whether his response was adequate. In the post-test, however, OP3 was able to elaborate for a much greater length *without* the need for such **External Support**.

IP3 Pre-test:

Student: Okay I have no goal in life. That's not a very good answer right? SO I should come up with something like I don't know.

Teacher: Can you elaborate on why you think that way?

Student: Because a goal in life is something that you want to pursue, but then whenever I try and think of what I want to pursue, then I start to think what am I going to do after I stop pursuing the goals. Then it's like I can't think of anything after the goals. So then it just becomes like ... (1.5 secs) wow I have like no life and I don't know what I am going to do with my life.

IP3 Post-test:

Student: Er ... (3 secs) oh my god I need some time to think man ... (6 secs). I don't know I think I'm very quiet. I can be very close to people when I want to, and when I am close to people, I tend to be very clingy. Oh wait is that three words or was that a sentence. So er clingy, quiet, and reserved I guess.

Teacher: But do elaborate la, with examples.

Student: *So quiet because whenever like I am with a lot of people, I tend to get quiet especially when I don't know how to react, I don't know what to say so I will just tend to keep quiet or just laugh. Laughter is the best medicine. Ya so I don't know <incomprehensible>. Then the next what did I say? Em em oh quiet then after that oh I get clingy. It's like when I'm close to people then my personal bubble just drops very quickly. Like if I'm actually not close to you, like I just cannot stand next to you so closely. But if I am close to you I don't really mind if you like hug me and touch me and everything. So that counts. And plus if I'm close to you, I don't really like it when like I just suddenly get left alone. Especially when like I know you don't really have anything to do then, come talk to me.*

IP3 showed a reduction in his reliance on **External Support**. Though the teacher did prompt him for more elaboration and examples in both the pre- and post-tests, we see IP3 learning to utilise **Internal Support** more frequently in the post-test, with his use of self-clarifying statements like 'I need some time to think man' and 'Then the next what did I say?'.

Comparing OP3's Post-test with IP3's Post-test, we see an improvement in the reduced reliance on **External Support**, suggesting that the intervention was useful in honing students' ability to elaborate on their responses by themselves. This could be attributed to similar tasks provided in our discussion circles, where students were tasked to elaborate on topics independently. Students only received **External Support** (peer prompts) when they could not elaborate further.

Internal Support

OP students struggled with providing introspective perspectives in the pre-test (underlined in the texts below). For example, they had difficulty stating personal views, elaborating on them and providing anecdotal evidence. However, in the post-test, OP4 showed more incidences of **Internal Support**. He was able to provide self-clarifying statements ('because like I can do things myself' / 'I've changed my mind'), and anecdotal evidence ('how I how we should look at all these people that have different sexualities'), showing a greater reliance on **Internal Support** to elaborate on the points:

OP4 Pre-test: *Er the gender equality issue because right now a lot of people feel that em like guys should have like em a more rights than women. So ya. Hope to fix that.*

OP4 Post-test: *... (1.5 secs) Outspoken er ... (3 secs) because I ... (2 secs) just say things that come to mind. ... (16 secs) Independent because like I can do things myself. And lastly er noisy because I talk a lot. ... (2 secs) Erm I think it's peoples' discrimination on their sexuality because like when before I was exposed to this issue right, I used to think that there's only ... (2 secs) like there weren't any other alternatives other than just ... (2 secs) like that one kind of like the normal or what society perceives as normal. So I think that after being exposed and knowing more about this issue, I've changed my mind about like how I how we should look at all these people that have different sexualities because em ... (2 secs) we are all like the same ... (2 secs) after all. Ya.*

When we compare the OP and IP responses in terms of **Internal Support**, we can draw some interesting conclusions.

IP4 Pre-test: *... (9 secs) I guess it would be poverty. Ya because I guess poverty is yesterday I just actually yesterday I just watched a video posted by TED and it was this guy speaking about why poverty is one of the most solvable problems in this world. He gave three ways to solve it and you know those three ways are just like because farming farmers er are make up the majority of those who are poor under the poverty line. So he focused more on helping the farmers and I think if there are more ideas like this it's really a solvable situation and I think*

poverty is something that us, especially us, a lot of us living in Singapore don't really get to see. Like how the HDB flats are you know the one-room HDB flats, the blocks with those flats are so-called hidden to majority of the people who are above the poverty line and I think that that is not the way it should be because all-in-all, the people who are under the poverty line are still humans, and we are all the same kind. So ya.

IP4 Post-test: Em personality or character. I guess open-minded firstly. Em if I were to elaborate on that I'd say open-minded in the sense that open-minded towards others and accepting towards others, and willing to accept others' personalities and their beliefs and the way of thinking. Especially during English we always talk about consequential topics and then sometimes it can get quite emotional and everyone can be quite you know fiested up and everything. But it's when we learn to accept each other's thinking and you know their perspective, ya I mean that's something I do la. Then em another word I guess em sincere. I like to, I like to, I like the feeling of being sincere. I cannot do anything without being doing it out of my own heart. I mean towards others when I treat them, I need to, I have this need to be genuine. And if I, I just can't let myself to be fake or ingenuine towards others la, insincere also. Ya last one would be em ... (4 secs) I guess sharp especially under pressure. So in situations when I'm under pressure and I have to make quick decisions, I guess I work well under those situations and then ya, that sharpness is brought out in me under those situations.

Comparing IP4's pre- and post-tests, IP students showed greater ability to rely on **Internal Support** to elaborate on their points. They were able to consistently reiterate personal opinions ('I think' / 'So ya' / 'I, I just can't let myself'), qualify their arguments with elaboration ('Especially' / 'I need to, I have this need to') and provide examples ('I guess I work well under those situations and then ya').

IP4's statements mirrored those of OP4's post-test responses, suggesting that the intervention was successful in increasing OP students' reliance on personal voice to elaborate on their points. However, the effectiveness of the intervention on IP students is questionable, with little improvement from IP4's pre-test to post-test responses due to their higher starting position and ability.

Discussion of Student Perception Survey Results

A student perception survey was administered to all students after the pre-test to measure students' responses to the intervention. The questions asked are listed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1

IP Classes Responses

Qns		SD	D	A	SA
1	<i>I picked up useful ideas from the discussion with my peers.</i>	1	0	0	29
2	<i>I enjoyed the discussions.</i>	2	0	1	30
3	<i>I am more motivated to speak to my peers after the discussions.</i>	3	0	4	29
4	<i>I am more confident of speaking in front of my peers after the discussions.</i>	4	0	2	26
5	<i>I am more confident when I speak now.</i>	5	0	4	28

Table 2

OP Classes Responses

Qns		SD	D	A	SA
1	<i>I picked up useful ideas from the discussion with my peers.</i>	1	5	54	6
2	<i>I enjoyed the discussions.</i>	1	7	52	6
3	<i>I am more motivated to speak to my peers after the discussions.</i>	1	10	50	5
4	<i>I am more confident of speaking in front of my peers after the discussions.</i>	1	9	50	6
5	<i>I am more confident when I speak now.</i>	1	9	50	6

The results of the student perception survey can be commented on in the following domains: confidence, enjoyment, motivation and relevance of the intervention.

Questions 1, 4 and 5 have a large percentage of students agreeing (A) or strongly agreeing (SA), that they had picked up useful ideas from the peer discussions and were more confident now in a speaking task, measuring a positive shift in students' perception of their own confidence in speaking after the intervention.

Question 2 shows similar results, with a large majority of students agreeing (A) or strongly agreeing (SA) that they enjoyed the discussion circles during the intervention.

Lastly, **Question 3** demonstrates students' motivation for future speaking tasks, with a majority agreeing (A) and strongly agreeing (SA) with the question.

Overall, the responses of the student perception survey show that the introduction of discussion circles have a positive impact on the affective domains of the students' oral literacy.

IP students display more confidence in the intervention compared to OP students, even though they experienced less of an improvement when we compare the difference between their pre- and post-tests' scores.

Conclusion

The results of this action research project supports the idea that the use of discussion circles in the English Language classroom has a positive impact on the effectiveness of oral literacy. An increased focus on communication and interaction among peers could be beneficial in expanding students' content knowledge, improving students' self-clarification as well as reducing the reliance on external support such as prompts from teachers.

The study and analysis of the results indicate that there was an improvement in all four aspects – Content, Clarity, External Support and Internal Support. Strategies used during the intervention seemed to have had more impact on the OP group than the IP group, whilst the qualitative analysis of the student perception survey demonstrated that students in both groups perceived an improvement in these domains as well.

In this study, we targeted different academic tracks (OP vs IP) specifically to see whether the intervention strategies would have different levels of effectiveness on students from different ability groups. As such, some strategies that we advocate for the OP students have been adapted from the IP syllabus, including increased opportunities for students to hone their presentation skills, the use of Socratic questioning in the classroom, thus shifting the focus from examination-based skills to real-world contexts and the practice of critical thinking.

In our discussions with other members of our fraternity, we have looked at the possibilities of using such pedagogy in other subject disciplines. The use of discussion circles in Mathematics, for example, allows students to brainstorm about possible solutions to solve a mathematical equation before the teacher's intervention. In Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), discussion circles provide an ideal place for students to hone their introspective skills by encouraging reflection on their beliefs and values.

Of course, there are some limitations to this research study. Firstly, the interventions were only conducted within a span of 10 lessons. The results might have been more significant if the intervention had been implemented over a longer period of time instead of just three months. Secondly, a group of 40 students is a relatively small number statistically to base a study on and thus the results cannot be generalised to a larger group of students. Lastly, while we are encouraged to see some improvements in OP students, our study sheds little light on similar strategies of effectiveness on IP students, who proved themselves to be already proficient in oral communication because they had been consistently exposed to these strategies in the classroom.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative results, further studies could look at how discussion circles can be used in other subject matter classrooms.

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Annex A: Oral Examination Rubrics - Generic Band Descriptors for Syllabus 1128/04

Generic Band Descriptors for Syllabus 1128/04

GCE O-LEVEL ORAL COMMUNICATION	
Reading Aloud	Spoken Interaction
<p>Assessment Criteria for Reading Aloud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronunciation & Articulation: to read aloud a text with accurate pronunciation and clear articulation • Rhythm & Fluency: to read with appropriate rhythm and stress to achieve a well-paced, fluent rendering of a text • Awareness of Purpose, Audience and Context: to read aloud a text with appropriate variations in voice qualities given the purpose, audience and context 	<p>Assessment Criteria for Spoken Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Response: to give considered and developed personal responses • Clarity of Expression: to express oneself clearly with apt use of vocabulary, structures and with good pronunciation • Interaction: to engage actively with the Examiners in a sustained discussion
<p>Band 1 (9 – 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very clear pronunciation and articulation that conveys meaning effectively • Reads with appropriate pace and fluency using appropriate rhythm and stress to good effect • Reads with full awareness of the purpose, audience and context 	<p>Band 1 (16 – 20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers well-considered personal responses which are coherent and well-developed • Expresses ideas clearly using a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary and structures, and supported by good pronunciation • Engages actively with the Examiners to sustain the discussion, introducing new ideas, opinions or issues where appropriate
<p>Band 2 (6 – 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally clear pronunciation and articulation with occasional errors • A mainly fluent reading with some mistakes in stress and rhythm • Reads with generally good awareness of the purpose, audience and context 	<p>Band 2 (11 – 15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers some thoughtful personal responses, which are developed to some extent • Expresses most ideas clearly using a range of largely appropriate vocabulary and structures, and supported by mostly correct pronunciation • Engages with the Examiners in a sustained discussion by responding well to the prompts but may not show initiative
<p>Band 3 (3 – 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronunciation of words is rather inaccurate, but some attempt to maintain clarity of articulation • Reading is hesitant with frequent mistakes in stress and rhythm • Reads with some awareness of the purpose, audience and context 	<p>Band 3 (6 – 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers some simple personal responses with little development • Expresses some ideas clearly using a limited range of vocabulary and structures with pronunciation that may sometimes impede communication • Engages with the Examiners in a discussion but may require considerable support or encouragement
<p>Band 4 (1 – 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very weak pronunciation and articulation which leads to distortion of meaning • Very hesitant reading with serious errors in stress and rhythm • Reads with little awareness of the purpose, audience and context 	<p>Band 4 (1 – 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers hardly any personal response with very little or no development • Any ideas expressed are in disconnected single sentences, phrases or single words with pronunciation that often impedes communication • Finds it difficult to maintain any sustained interaction, even with repeated prompting

Note: For **Reading Aloud**, a mark of 0 should be given only when the candidate is not able to read even a single word from the text; and for **Spoken Interaction**, a mark of 0 should be given only when the candidate does not give any relevant response.