

Reflecting on the AQA Summer 26 GCSE MFL Exams

Listening

↻ TRACYWILLIAMS6 Sep 23, 2026 06:40pm

★ Takeaways from the Examiners Report

1. Train to students to listen to the whole sentence. Not just a key word.
2. Higher - ensure that your answer conveys the whole idea - not just a partial understanding.
"Translate as much of the information given as you can, but don't invent details that aren't there!"
3. Test vocab understanding through listening and writing, rather than just reading and writing.
Particularly important for French when the words often don't sound like they are spelt.
4. Practise hearing a tense, not just reading and writing a tense. Listen - which tense is this - why?
5. Remember that the dictation task requires students to write in the TL, rather than translating it into English. Ensure students are familiar with the layout of the papers.
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Checking after dictation

Build a routine after every dictation activity, where you get students to look at what they have written and see if it looks like the TL, if they can spot any mistakes.

1. Where is the verb? Is the ending correct?
2. Article and Noun - do they agree?

Turn each dictation activity into an opportunity to test / retrieve key grammar concepts and likely mistakes.

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Ask students to re-read the sentence and check for sense. What word do they know that sounds like that in that context in order to spell it correctly

Speaking

Takeaways from the Examiners Report

1. Role play. Answer what the bullet point asks. Train students to look carefully at the prompt and highlight the key words. Then ensure that their answer includes those key features. Read, Highlight, think, then write.
2. Key message - role needs to be short and accurate. Don't add additional information here.
3. Make students can ask questions. Give them multiple opportunities to form questions using key question words. Build this into lessons on regularly occasions to develop automaticity.
4. Slow down during the read aloud. This will give you time to think and will support the examiner to identify the different sound spelling combinations.
5. At higher in the read aloud, a major pronunciation mistake caps the mark at 3. Make sure students understand the link between speaking too quickly and making careless mistakes.
6. Spend time revisiting and practicing the common mistakes in the language. Fr Je vs J'ai. SFC. SFE. Acute accent + er. le / la / les.
7. Unprepared conversation. Answer the actual question before you extend the answer. Direct answer + opinion / reason + development. Don't start a memorised answer and hope it addresses the question.
8. Photo description - get the basics right. In FR personnes, filles, garçons, trois, quatre and the SFE / Silent ENT on the verb.
9. Conversation AO1 - How much different information has been communicated. Repeating or recycling the same information doesn't increase the amount communicated.
10. A good higher strategy is answer + reason + detail + example + your experience. However, the basics need to be right before using more complex structures.

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Ideas for your SOW

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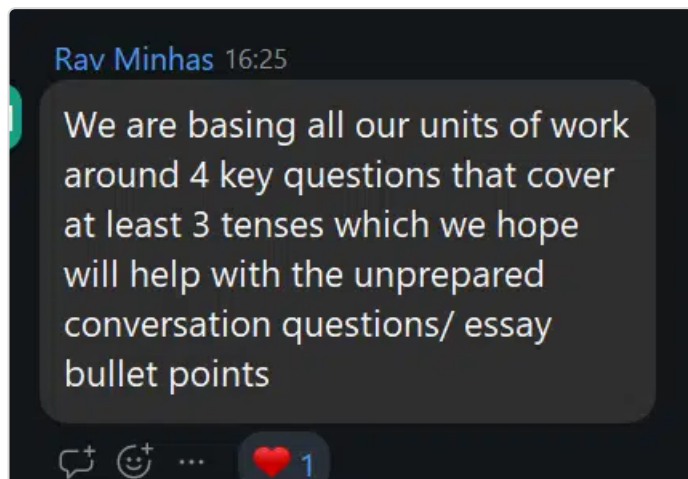


Photo Description

We amended our original PALMOJ based on the examiners report saying to leave out irrelevant information about opinions.

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Parle - moi des photos PALMA			
Sur la première/deuxième image/photo On the 1 st /2 nd picture/photo La première/deuxième image/photo montre The 1 st /2 nd photo shows			
PEOPLE		ACTION	
Un homme/ une femme A man/ woman		Il / elle est en train de/d' +inf He/she is (in the process of) +ing	
Un garçon/ une fille A boy/ girl		Ils / elles sont en train de/d' +inf They are (in the process of) +ing	
Un vieux/jeune homme An old/young man		Parler talking sourire smiling rire laughing se disputer arguing marcher walking	
Une vieille/jeune femme A old/young woman		travailler working jouer playing manger eating boire drinking étudier studying	
Une famille a family un couple a couple		en - while	
Un/une prof a teacher des élèves some pupils		Parlant talking souriant smiling riant laughing se disputant arguing marchant walking	
Des jeunes/ados some young people/teenagers		travaillant working jouant playing mangeant eating	
Beaucoup de gens/de personnes lots of people		buvant drinking étudiant studying	
LOCATION		MOOD	
Cette photo a été prise à l'intérieur/extérieur		Il/elle a l'air he / she looks Ils / elles ont l'air they look Ils / elles semblent they seem	
The picture was taken inside/ outside		Content(e)s happy triste(s) sad fatigué (e/s) tired	
Sur la plage on the beach au bord de la mer by the seaside		heureux (e/s) angry concentré(e/s) focused	
à la montagne in the mountains à la campagne in the countryside		Il/elle a l'air de passer un bon moment he / she looks like he/she is having a good time.	
en ville in town		Ils / elles ont l'air de passer un mauvais moment They look like they are having a bad time	
Dans un parc/ un stade/ une cuisine / une rue / une forêt in a park / stadium / kitchen / road / forest		Anything else	
Il y a aussi ...		des livres - books	des bouteilles - bottles
des ordinateurs - computers		des verres - glasses	au sol - on the ground
des meubles - furniture		des déchets - rubbish	sur la table - on the table
des voitures - cars		de la nourriture - food	à côté - on the side

PALMA

Higher Role Play - note for the teacher

If the teacher prompt has two elements, split it into two questions. Do you like... Student answers. Then - Why / Why not?

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Read Aloud + Unseen Questions

Make sure students understand that the unseen questions are linked directly to the read aloud task. Words from the read aloud are likely to appear in the unseen questions.

Students can answer using text from the read aloud passage where appropriate.

Train students to:

1. Read the read aloud passage looking for meaning. This will help them to understand the unseen questions.
2. Make a note of unfamiliar words - can they guess what they might mean. Record these words on their prep sheet.
3. Look carefully at the passage for tricky phonemes, liaison. Make notes on the prep sheet.
4. Don't panic when you hear the question. Listen for the question word and then the gist of the rest of the question.
5. Ask for the question to be repeated if needed.
6. Pause - and then answer. Use your notes in front of you if helpful.

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In Spanish, we speak!

A whole school mantra, lived by all language teachers, ensuring there is a speaking element (not just chorusing) in every single Spanish lesson in all year groups. Thanks for Paul Jones for sharing. :)

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Speaking and writing

During form time I held small intervention groups for Foundation candidates. We practised giving 3 answers to questions in past, present and future tenses for a year using mini white boards. It definitely made a difference.

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Responding to unprepared questions

We identified that because this is in 'examiner language', and therefore not as familiar to pupils, it threw them off. I looked at all of the specimen papers, and put in the question stems into AI and summarised the most frequent ones, put them into a wordwheel and used it regularly in class to practice with pupils, to ensure they were familiar.

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Building opportunities for pupils to practise the read aloud skill as early as possible through active speaking activities aiming to target key phonological issues that may come up in the exam - h, z, j, hard and soft C

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read_aloud_example.docx

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We were able to embed speaking moments in almost each lesson with support (I DO WE DO YOU DO). We then removed support and students were able to debate points

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Higher - make sure you provide multiple opportunities to use different tenses throughout the conversation to give students the opportunity to show what they know.

I wanted to upload a slide with speaking practice but cannot

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PALMS

I've updated this to simplify it so pupils can say more, rather than complex language. I removed 'action' (present continuous tense) and replaced with 'appearance'

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Read Aloud

Identification of specific phonemes (rather than recognising a familiar word and knowing how to say it) is the key determiner in the read aloud. Students should expect their to be tricky words. Teachers should make sure there is regular practice of pronouncing the harder words from the vocab lists in their lessons.

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Want to build an element of structured / leading to spontaneous talk into every lesson. What about register routines? You could use your bank of starter questions for the unprepared conversation as the stimulus, start with some scaffold on the screen which you gradually remove each lesson. Students turn and talk to each other and you move round the room listening to as many students as you can.

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What is 'register routine'?

Hier (yesterday)	j'ai (I)	joué sur mon Xbox (played on my Xbox)
Hier <u>soir</u> (yesterday evening)	mon frère et moi avons (my brother and I)	regardé des clips sur Youtube (watched some Youtube videos)
Hier <u>matin</u> (yesterday morning)	ma famille et moi <u>avons</u> (my family and I)	joué du violoncelle (played the cello)

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A great strategy to make sure all of your students get regular 1:1 time with you and feedback on their speaking.

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Traciean Richards from King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls shared a great strategy being used in her department, which builds on the concept of intentional monitoring.

Intentional teacher – student interaction

"We each have a clipboard with the names of students in our class and each term we aim to have some individual 'talk time' with all of them. We speak to them whilst pupils are working on a task, it's 2 mins max and we ask them 2 questions linked to the work we are doing. We don't mark or grade the interaction, just tick off that we have spoken to them and then as a department we identify common themes which are cropping up multiple times, pronunciation, grammar problems, questions they can't answer."

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A strategy to support annotation for the read aloud

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Shelley Walklate shared a strategy to support students to improve their reading aloud through careful annotation.

DUAL

Je vais Je voudrais très Dans trois ans

Dot Silent Letters Underline key graphemes Accents – circle them! Liaison – identify it!

If anyone knows who created this strategy, please let us know and we'll credit it to the original author!

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Understanding how to 'flip' a question into the start of an answer is a key skill for the exam and for later life! Practise of this needs to be built into as many lessons as possible so it becomes automatic.

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Claire Bowker from Bishop Walsh shares the work she is doing to encourage spontaneous talk time in her year 10 classroom.

What are the barriers to spontaneous talk?

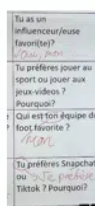
1. Understanding the question.
2. Knowing how to start your answer.
3. Including a verb
4. Knowing what you actually want to say.

1. Model how to use the question in your answer.

Use the question to help you start your answer

1. Switch the subject of the verb
Tu aimes le foot?
J'aime le foot.
2. Possessive pronoun change
Ton/ta/tes turns to mon/ma/mes
Quelle est ta matière favorite?
Ma matière favorite est.....

2. Use mini whiteboards or cold call to practise.
3. Give your students some input over the questions.
4. Let them choose their talk time partner.
5. Resist the urge to correct all their errors!
6. Provide repair strategies.



Reading

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Take Aways from the Examiners Report

1. Read the question. Find the evidence in the passage. Then check the rest of the sentence before jumping to any conclusions.
2. Practise A or B, A and B style questions by adding a 'why' or 'prove it' element into the task.
3. Regularly share the mark schemes with students so they can see how much information is needed. The answer nearly always needs to communicate the complete idea, not just the gist.
4. Higher – ensure students are familiar with the simple future as well as the near future!
5. Make sure students look for and can translate the star words.

6. Each of the words from the defined content list need to be taught and revisited enough times for recognition to be automatic.
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Which are the most important words from the vocab lists. In my opinion - the star words! Make sure your students know these words well and draw attention to them wherever you see them!

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What are the most important words for Year 10 / 11 to focus on learning?



Now is the time to focus on high frequency words which might appear several times on a reading or listening paper regardless of topic. Frequency words, time indicators, prepositions and other non-topic-specific words. At Arthur Terry we call these star words, because they turn your students into super star linguists. They are words like **same, other, late, until, too**. The words that don't fit neatly into topic vocab lists but change the meaning of a sentence.

Writing

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✦ Take aways from the Examiners Report

1. Photo task - 5 simple sentences with an accurate verb. Write numbers as figures to avoid spelling mistakes. Draw attention to the fact that il y a un deux is wrong!
2. Remind students they don't have to translate the bullet point in their answer. They just have to answer it. Model how to think more laterally about what they can say. E.g Your favourite subject doesn't require the word subject or favourite in the answer.
3. On Foundation Q2. Five simple sentences with five different verbs. To increase the AO3 mark, encourage students to use a 3rd person verb.
4. On the 90 word question, each bullet point must be addressed. Students who write something related to the overall topic, but don't address the specifics don't get the marks.
5. Verbs are crucial. Spend time in lessons ensuring students can use high frequency verbs correctly and they have at least 5 verbs which are specific to different themes.
6. Make sure the response to each bullet point is anchored in the tense it is testing. Multiple examples of the tense with different verbs.
7. Variety doesn't mean complexity. Different opinions, a range of adjectives, intensifiers, connectives, third person, infinitive constructions. Avoid using the same structures over and over again.
8. Stick to the word limit.
9. Translation - don't miss out the little words. Tick off each little word as you translate the sentence. Or as part of your checking mechanism.
10. Higher writing - avoid stock introductions. They are wasted words and can lead to mistakes. Get straight to the point!

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verb rockstars

15 verbs in each year group at KS3 - 45 altogether. Pupils learn the infinitives - we use language nut to support this by creating our own content. Following the infinitives, we then show pupils how to conjugate verbs in 1st person singular in year 7, 3rd person singular in year 8 and 1st person plural in year 9. This allows students to use a wide variety of verbs and crucially to talk about other people.

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Developing your answers

Hobbies that make you happy

Nadar me hace feliz.

Nadar me hace feliz **ya que me relaja.**

Nadar me hace feliz **ya que me relaja y**
Padlet Drive 🔗 **me chifla competir en concursos.**

DEVELOPING_ANSWERS.odp

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Choosing the best question

When choosing a question, encourage students to think about whether the question will allow them to use a range of language. Different verbs. Different adjectives. Different opinions. Pick the one that lends itself to a range of language.

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Being able to use the high frequency verbs accurately is key at all grades. Build a verb fluency routine into your regular retrieval practice. You could also modify it so you identify the 5 most important verbs for each topic area and practise conjugating those verbs regularly. 1st person for a grade 4. 1st and 3rd person for a grade 5. Multiple persons for a grade 7 +

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Ideas previously shared by Libby Franklin

What are the most important verbs for Year 11 to focus on learning now?

Focus on a small number of key verbs which can be used in all topic areas. Make sure students are confident using these structures in the past, the present and the future tenses. Provide lots of practice opportunities moving from receptive to productive with mini whiteboard work and turn and talk opportunities.

Past	Present	Future
J'ai visité	Je visite	Je vais visiter
J'ai mangé	Je mange	Je vais manger
Je suis allé	Je vais	Je vais aller
J'ai fait	Je fais	Je vais faire
C'était	C'est	Ce sera
Il y avait	Il y a	Il y aura

Encourage your students to write down the verbs they know at the top of their writing paper. They should try to use these verbs regardless of the topic area.

Other reflections

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Advice for Learners Posters

AQA have created a set of Advice for Learners posters for each paper. Spend time looking at their top tips and then ensure you incorporate the advice into your lessons.

Available here. [Top tips for exam success A4](#)

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Top Tips for Success in Your Listening Exam

AQA Questions matter

1. Make the most of your 5 minutes' reading time at the start of the test:

- Read all instructions and questions carefully.
- Look carefully at the title for each question - this will tell you what it is about.
- Highlight or underline key words in the questions.
- Look out for questions with more than one part - you'll need to answer all questions from the same extract. Make a note about this in the margin of your question paper.
- For each question, note down key words in the target language to help you listen out for answers.

2. Listen to the whole extract

- Don't jump to conclusions based on the first thing you hear or single words - keep listening for all the details.

3. Remember: In Section A, you'll hear each extract twice

- It's a good idea to use the first listening to get the general idea and the second to focus on the details.

4. Always try to answer every question

- Even if you're unsure, have a go - especially on multiple choice questions. A guess is better than a blank!

5. Focus on what the question is really asking

- Look for specific details and use any examples given to guide your answer - if it says "one reason" or "one detail" - only give one.

6. Make any changes to your answers very clear

- If you need to change a multiple-choice answer, write your final answer clearly next to the answer box. Don't write over the top of your original answer - it may not be clear enough for the examiner to mark.

7. Don't panic if a question feels hard

- The paper includes a mix of easier and harder questions - just keep going and try to answer all questions.

8. Use your two minutes' checking time wisely

- In the dictation task in Section B, check your spellings carefully and make sure the sentences make sense.

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Jonathon Mumford is offering a free programme starting on the 1st October for your year 11 students in French, Spanish and German. It looks amazing! Sign up here. [Sign up to take part in the 30 steps challenge](#)

Full info on this linked in post. [Post](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

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