

# *Speaking Checklist*

*By Daniel Sansoni*

## **The Basics**

- *Try to relax and be confident* – despite how nervous you feel.
- *Do not speak too quickly or slowly* – speak at a natural pace.
- *Look at the examiner when you speak* – not only because it is considered polite by Westerners, but also because that way the examiner can see your lips move, and therefore, have an increased chance of understanding you.
- *Do not worry too much about your grammar and vocabulary* – these things are very important, but it is too late to correct them in the test. Speak as accurately as you can, but do not let fears of making a mistake or using the wrong word impede your fluency.
- *Smile* – it never hurts.

## The Specifics

- *Your initial answer to any question should nearly always take the same grammatical form as the question itself* – if you follow this rule, then you will make less mistakes, provided you are able to distinguish the form of the question and then accurately replicate it.
- *Answer the question and then elaborate* – not the other way round. Answer yes/no questions with a yes or a no before going on to explain your answer. By contrast, do not answer A or B questions with a yes or no.
- *If you don't understand what the examiner means* – do not say “no”. In Phase 1, the examiner is not really permitted to paraphrase or explain words. He or she will simply repeat the question word for word. However, if you paraphrase the question yourself in a way such that you are asking a yes/no question, you may get a yes or a nod of the head. The same thing might happen in Phase 2 if you don't understand a word on the speaking card. In Phase 3 the examiner is permitted to paraphrase; however, it looks better if you can specify the part you didn't comprehend.
- *Make good use of speaking strategies* – these can both buy you time and gain you marks with the examiner.

*Time buying strategies* – are phrases such as “Well... let me think about that...”; “That's a tough question to answer...”; “I've never thought about that before, but I'd have to say...”. Simply parroting the question is another time buying tactic.

*Circumlocution* – is the skill of being able to find a way around gaps in the vocabulary bank. You are not expected to know every little trivial word in the English language, but you are expected to be able to show language resources developed enough to find a way to convey the same meaning with other words. So when you get stuck on a word, let it go and try to find another way to get the same message across – when you do this well you will impress the examiner.