

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2013

GCE Spanish (6SP01)
Paper 1A

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General Introduction

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections – A and B and lasts between 8-10 minutes.

In section A candidates are required to respond to four Edexcel-set questions on a stimulus related to a student's chosen general topic area. The first two questions will relate directly to the content of the stimulus card and the second two questions will invite the candidate to give opinions or react to the topic of the stimulus.

In section B the teacher/examiner should engage the candidate in a discussion that, although relates to the same general topic area and its linked sub-topics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 50 using the grid printed in the specification (pg 24 and pg 25):

- Quality of language (Accuracy) - 8 marks
- Quality of language (Range) - 8 marks
- Response - 20 marks
- Understanding (stimulus specific) - 4 marks
- Understanding (General topic area) - 10 marks.

Candidates' Responses

There were some good examples of excellent teacher examining. In general teacher /examiners have clearly read and interpreted requirements outlined in the oral training guide and the previous reports to centres. The majority of candidates responded well to the demands of the examination and had a good understanding of the requirements. Most candidates performed very well and some discussions were excellent. The best candidates had clearly carried out research and referred to this in their discussions. They spoke with confidence and understanding about their chosen topic area. The standard of performance by teachers and students was generally very high.

Candidates must prepare for the test and have a sound knowledge of the language appropriate to AS Level. However the success in this test is also determined in part by the teacher/examiner's approach to the questioning during the test.

Examiners reported far fewer problems than in previous series (rephrasing of and the addition of supplementary questions in section A, short tests, (approximately 5 this series), not moving away from stimulus sub-topic in section B and not asking all questions in section A.

Section A

All candidates had clearly prepared their stimulus well. They generally anticipated the four Edexcel set questions well and demonstrated an understanding of the content in their answers to the first two questions in Section A.

However, Centres will need to be reminded to advise candidates that section A does not need to last 4 minutes and should not last more than this. The first two questions need to be full but can be concise and should be limited to (all) the information from the stimulus, and that more detail should be found in answers to questions 3 and 4.

Many examiners also noted again that some candidates did not give all the relevant information from the stimulus and they were not able to achieve the full 4 marks for this section.

Although lifts from the stimulus card can be accepted, it is important that candidates' responses are appropriate to the question. Candidates must avoid reading out long sections of the stimulus as direct lifts which are not targeted to answering the question will not be acceptable.

It is still recommended that to demonstrate a "good" or "excellent" understanding of the stimulus material candidates would need, in most cases, to expand, explain and develop the content in some way.

Examiners noted in particular this series that a few candidates wanted to introduce irrelevant and pre-prepared personal opinions in response to questions 1 and 2 which would not be rewarded positively.

The very best candidates were able to manipulate language from the stimulus and expand, explain and develop the content, without including irrelevant pre-learnt personal information.

Some very good examples noted by examiners are illustrated below.

General Topic Area: Youth Culture and Concerns
Stimulus card 1 - A más amor, menos amigos

1. *Qué nos dice el primer párrafo sobre los amigos y el amor?*

Candidate: *Cuando un joven se enamora sus amistades se reducen. Tiene un número más pequeño de amigos íntimos porque los dejan para concentrarse en su novia o novio y claro salen meno con su grupo de amigos.*

Stimulus 2 - La magia de Glastonbury

1. *Según el primer párrafo, ¿por qué se describe el festival como una experiencia única?*

Candidate: *Glastonbury es un festival como ningún otro porque no solo actúan cantantes famosos sino también hay actividades relacionadas con la política y la cultura. Un ejemplo de esto es la danza. La gente que va al festival respira un ambiente de libertad lejos de su vida normal y donde pueden hacer lo que quiera.*

General Topic Area: Lifestyle, Health and Fitness

Stimulus 1 - El estrés, lo bueno y lo malo

1. *Según el primer párrafo, ¿por qué es importante sufrir estrés en moderación?*

Candidate: *Un estrés moderado nos ayuda a vivir positivamente porque nos da fuerza y energía para levantarnos y hacer lo que es necesario en nuestras vidas.*

Stimulus 2 - la comida de la abuela ¿es sana?

1. *Qué nos dice el primer párrafo sobre los abuelos españoles?*

Candidate: *Los abuelos influyen en la educación de los nietos en general y en particular nos enseñan a comer saludablemente. Las abuelas son buenas cocinera y nos dan tres platos caseros con verdura y fruta"*

General Topic Area: World Around Us

Stimulus 2 - Viajar en bicicleta es sano pero no tanto

1. *Según el primer párrafo, ¿cuales son las ventajas y desventajas de viajar en bicicleta?*

Candidate: *Es bueno montar en bici porque contamina menos, ahorramos dinero y nos mantenemos en forma. Pero es malo porque el ciclista respira más rápido y más profundo y se puede inhalar más contaminantes. El artículo dice que hasta un 5% más.*

General Topic Area: Education and Employment

Stimulus 1 - la música clásica para educar

There was some excellent examples of language manipulation in the responses noted, for example:

- *enseñarles* for *incularles*,
- *habilidad* for *destreza*
- *conducta/actitud* for *comportamiento*.

General Topic Area: Education and Employment

Stimulus 2 - Educación superior por móvil

This card was successfully answered by most candidates but some failed to mention that mobiles as an essential part of their degree, or the possibility to consult a teacher at any time. One candidate said enthusiastically, "*sería estupendo poder hacer preguntas a tu professor 24 horas al día*".

Answers to question 4 concentrated mostly on the necessity to go to University to get a good job and few candidates mentioned the burden of the debt.

In general, examiners reported a clear link between performances in section A and the candidates' overall performance. Sometimes there was a marked difference in the two sections where candidates struggled in section A and yet were almost fluent in section B. This may indicate a lack of spontaneity and pre-learning and the mark in response would have been affected. Fortunately this was only the case in a minority of centres.

Section B

Most teacher/examiners asked interesting and relevant questions based on their candidates chosen General Topic Area. They listened to the candidates in order to develop a natural discussion. Many teacher/examiners gave their candidates ample opportunity to demonstrate their linguistic knowledge and they were sympathetic to the different needs and abilities of their candidates.

However, there were a few examples of candidates who had appeared to have over-rehearsed the answers to section B questions, which should be spontaneous and unpredictable and yet not unfamiliar. In these few cases the examiners withheld marks for response to the maximum 8 marks.

One examiner noted some incidents of teacher/examiners covering too many sub-topics in section B which resulted in a question/answer session and not the discussion which is required to show depth of understanding.

Examiners also noted that in some centres even where candidates had not pre-learnt material they were being allowed to continue for long, uninterrupted periods. Teacher/examiners need to be reminded that they should, in this event, interrupt and ask supplementary questions to encourage a natural discussion.

It is clear that there is some inevitable overlap between General Topic Areas and the sub-topics. Where a natural discussion leads into a sub-topic that sits in another General Topic Area the teacher/examiner needs to ask questions which links the topic back to the chosen General Topic Area. For example, technologies can be discussed as part of Lifestyle, Health and Fitness, as long as they relate to the health issues or causes of obesity for example and more unhealthy lifestyles.

Examiners reported that the vast majority of candidates had clearly been prepared well, general conversations were spontaneous and they were at ease with the lexis and structures required for conversation and spoke with enthusiasm. It is apparent, however, that in a minority of centres examiners were asking less helpful questions of the candidates in Section B. The use of GCSE like questions, personal and closed questions did not allow the more able candidates to demonstrate a good depth of understanding as

is required for the higher marks in this test. Some examples were noted as follows:

- ¿Compras Cds o descargas música?
- ¿Vas a conciertos?
- ¿Cuando tuviste tu primer móvil?
- ¿Que deporte practicas?
- ¿Qué deporte practicabas en el pasado?
- ¿Tienes un idolo de las Olimpiadas?
- ¿Gasta mucho en marcas o en moda?
- ¿Y tus amigos?
- ¿Comes comida rápida?

The questions above provide the candidates with little opportunity to express opinions and expand on their responses and the teacher examiner will have no choice but to continue to ask questions on different sub topics not necessarily related to each other. More open ended questions would be like those below:

- ¿Por qué crees que la moda es tan importante para los jovenes?
- ¿Hasta qué punto puede tener la moda una influencia negative en los jóvenes?
- ¿Hasta que punto la gente famosa promueve la anorexia/la bulimia?
- ¿Y las revistas de moda?
- ¿Cuáles son los aspectos positivos de la tecnología?
- ¿Qué aspectos negativos hay?
- ¿Qué peligros puede haber para un niño/un adolescente?
- ¿Qué puede hacerse para protegerlos?

Once again centres are advised to follow the clear guidance they have been given regarding the conduct of the examination in the comment section of the OR1 form and refer to the oral training guide and oral examiner handbook.

General Guidance for teacher/examiners (T/Es)

- Tapes, Cds and Usb should be labelled clearly and it should be possible to check the sequencing of the stimulus cards
- Audio material **MUST** be checked before posting to avoid unnecessary delays
- TEs should develop section B as a natural discussion and not use the same questions for all
- TEs could try to be more innovative in their questioning
- TEs should interrupt candidates when they attempt to recite pre-learned material. Good preparation is rewarded as long as it doesn't affect spontaneity
- Teacher/Examiners are reminded that a minimum of one, but ideally two sub topics should be discussed in Section B. and that more sub topics covered will not benefit candidates

- Questions should be asked at a different and more challenging level than GCSE and should attempt to demonstrate the full linguistic potential of individuals
- It is best to avoid being too helpful to the candidates. Teacher examiners must not rephrase questions unnecessarily or complete candidates' sentences for them, neither should they provide them with key words and ideas nor correct them during the test.
- Whilst it is recommended that teacher/examiners keep their input to a minimum it is a requirement of the oral test that section B is a discussion – a natural conversation which flows through (preferably two of) the sub topics of the candidates' chosen topic area. Extended monologues, regurgitated material, flat intonation, over prepared material are all clear indicators of a test which has been pre-learnt/over prepared and which will receive a low mark for "Response". Examiners should indicate this on the OR form for each candidate.

Suitability of stimulus cards chosen by candidates

Although the two most popular General Topic Areas were unsurprisingly Youth Culture and concerns and Lifestyle, Health and Fitness, in this order, it was very pleasing to see that some centres had given their candidates a choice from the full range of the four General Topic Areas. Education and Employment still appears to be the least popular. All stimulus cards proved accessible to all candidates and most demonstrated a good understanding of their content.

Centre performance including administration (e.g. submission of oral forms, quality of recording, timings etc).

In general the administration of the tests was carried out exceptionally well this series. Most scripts arrived shortly after the end of the oral window, to the correct examiner and most were well packaged, although not all. Not all candidates names and numbers were recorded at the start of the oral and in a minority of cases the candidate number was recorded incorrectly. Some centres did not include the correct paperwork and some had to be contacted to forward the missing OR forms or replace blank CDs

The examiners noted on the whole a high quality of sound for the orals this series although in a minority of cases the teacher examiner is clearer than the candidate. Most centres recorded their orals onto CDs, some still using audio cassettes and more sent USB sticks this series. Although cassettes are still accepted it would be advisable to invest in digital recording equipment such as small digital recorders the size of mobile phones which cost between £35-40 as this significantly improves the quality of the recording.

The timing of orals was generally better than previously and yet a few centres and no marks were withheld this series for tests that were too short.

Centres will also need to be reminded of the following:

Careful reading of the Teacher/Examiner handbook is advised before conducting the orals

- It is helpful to record the name, candidate number, the chosen topic area and the stimulus card (e.g 1A) at the start of each oral test. OR forms or labels should indicate the candidates' sequence for the tests
- The new version of the OR1 form should be downloaded from the Edexcel website or can be copied from the Teacher/Examiner handbook.
- Where cassette tapes are still used they need to be checked before the start of the oral test. In a minority of cases teacher/examiners did not leave enough room on the tape and had to turn the cassette over to record the end of the test. Digital recordings generally have better sound quality and are easier to copy and less bulky. Batteries for all equipment used needs to be checked throughout the oral examination period and at least each day of examining.
- Teacher/examiners should check the recordings of their candidates/recording equipment at the start and end of each test..
- Cassettes/CDs should be well packaged when they are sent to examiners as some are arriving damaged although this has not affected examiners' ability to mark this series
- Teacher/examiners are reminded to ask the entire question in section A as some missed the "¿por qué?" and candidates failed to justify their answers. Teacher/examiners must also repeat questions in section A or B if asked to do so. If this is done frequently, however, the candidate's mark for Understanding and Response may be affected

Quality of language - Accuracy - There were some excellent performances by candidates and not all from near native speakers. A good proportion of candidates used a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and structures enabling them to speak fluently and accurately.

However, for others the level of language accuracy was variable and some candidates are still making many basic errors:

The same common errors occur in the language of less able candidates candidates:

- *Misuse of gustar,*
- *Gender and agreement of nouns and adjectives*
- *Confusion of the verbs: ser/estar/haber, and por/para*
- anglicised pronunciation "especialmente", "ooZar (usar)", "technolgeea",
- the tendencies to pronounce the 'H',
- The pronunciation of "párrafo" as "parragrafo"

- lack of subject/verb agreements, the confusion of first and third person verbs frequent use infinitives as main verbs, (Los jovenes beber mucho, los padres tener poco tiempo)
- the use of double presents (los jovenes tienen hacen muchas cosas, es tiene, la gente puede veo)
- the preterite and the perfect were inappropriately formed (teneron, dijeron, podé, tengaba, ha hacido)
- the pronunciation of *presión* as "preCión" was noted often
- indiscriminate use of masculine and feminine genders (even when given in stimulus cards eg. La festival, un festival única)

At times communication was impeded:

Eg. "es muy importancia de fumando", "pueden muchas divertidas", "puede infusiar", "pueden mucha presura".

In these cases marks for Quality of Language Accuracy will be withheld

Examiners noted also that some centres had worked hard to encourage students to use and incorporate complex structures, sentences with subjunctives and conditional sentences with "si". It is, however, recommended to be done not at the expense of developing a natural discussion.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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