

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE
in Spanish (6SP03) Paper 1A/1B

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6SP03 GCE Spanish – Examiner’s report – June 2015

The following points were noted by the examiners:

Format of the test

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections and lasts between 11 and 13 minutes.

The first section is a debate and requires candidates to present and to take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. The examiner then plays devil’s advocate, adopts the opposite view to the candidate and provides strong and meaningful challenges to allow candidates to defend their views and to use the language of debate and argument.

At the end of this section, the examiner indicates that the examination is moving to the second part of the test and moves away smoothly from the debate in part one, to the discussion in part two, by asking a link question that leads from the initial issue into an area associated with the initial issue.

It is acceptable to move to the second part of the test by moving to a completely different topic and making an appropriate remark to that effect *“Ahora vamos a hablar de algo completamente diferente.?”*

In this second part of the examination candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to engage in a natural, unpredictable (but not unfamiliar) and meaningful discussion of two or three follow up issues. During this section the examiner should encourage the candidate to express their views on the issues raised.

The aim of this unit is set out in Section A, page 6, of the Specification. Candidates are expected to interact effectively with the teacher/examiner, defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher/examiner moves the conversation away from the chosen issue. Centres are reminded that the test is an examination of the candidate’s ability to use language spontaneously in largely unpredictable circumstances.

Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 50.

Response - 20 marks

There are three descriptors in this box.

- Spontaneity. Is the discourse spontaneous or pre-learnt/over rehearsed? To what extent?

Discourse is the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the teacher and the examiner developing the line of argument and exploring it in more depth. In practice, this means that each participant addresses the points made by the other responding appropriately to each other’s input, whether that be a question, a comment or a remark.

Candidates will score well here if the test is a genuine discourse and not a sequence of questions and answers.

- Abstract concepts. Ideas beyond the norm: moral, ethical, political, values and opinions. Can the candidate handle abstract concepts not purely concrete exchanges? Is the discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive?

-Range of lexis and structures. Does the candidate have a good range of lexis and sentence structures appropriate to the issues discussed? Is the language authentically used?

Quality of Language - 7 marks

This box assesses accuracy of language, pronunciation and intonation.

Reading and research - 7 marks

This box assesses the candidate's level of awareness and understanding of both general issues and the chosen issue for debate

Candidates need to undertake research into their chosen issue and read widely around other topics in order to be able to demonstrate awareness and to be able to formulate their opinion and justify their arguments.

Comprehension and development - 16 marks

There are two descriptors in this box:

- The ability to understand the spoken language. Can candidates understand all the implications of the questions put to them? Is there evidence of challenging questions required to demonstrate that candidates have engaged in a discussion and debate at an appropriate intellectual level for A2?

- The ability to develop the responses. Can candidates respond demonstrating understanding, take the initiative and move the discussion forward? Can candidates independently sustain the development of ideas? Can candidates develop the discussion by offering longer contributions that lead to further paths for development.

Development is appropriately expanding on an idea and point of view. This can be in form of justification, illustration, exemplification, clarification, comparison of the candidate's ideas and views.

Candidate's performance

Most centres are now very familiar with what is required of this unit and their candidates were well prepared. There was a range in quality in the performances heard. However there were many fine and very competent performances noted.

It is very important for centres to remember that successful outcome for candidates in this test is closely related to and often dependent upon the way the teacher/examiner conducts the examination. The following observations from tests submitted this summer illustrate this point.

Some examiners allowed their candidates to recite long monologues learnt by heart without interruption and at times it appeared that they had colluded with candidates. Such practice merely indicates a lack of spontaneity and an over reliance on pre-learning. In such instances candidate's marks will have been affected as per Marking guidance sheet.

Candidates should be told that they will be expected to discuss any of the issues they have worked on in the class, at home or are currently in the news. The precise issues to be discussed in their exam and how they are going to be treated constitutes

the unpredictable nature of the test and thereby ensures that candidates' responses are spontaneous.

Candidates will not score highly if centres use the same set of topics and questions for all candidates.

In some cases the initial issue was conducted as a knowledge test in which the examiner sought information from the candidate on his/her issue rather than as a debate. If the examiner did not challenge the candidate's stance the appropriate penalty cap was applied, as per the Marking guidance sheet.

Some teachers did not observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination adversely affecting the candidate's marks. Some presentations were too long. Some debates were too short or too long. Some teachers spent so long on the initial issue and the first topic that they had little time to develop a second one.

The majority of candidates did answer the question asked but there were still some who decided to reinterpret the question into one that they would have liked to be put to them and followed their own agenda.

In spite of the above it was pleasing to note that many candidates approached the test with confidence and responded readily and fluently to all questions asked and they were able to develop their replies without too much reliance on or prompting from the examiner.

The debate

The best candidates had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support their arguments. They also had good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. Less able performing candidates simply relied on assertion, generalisations or personal conviction to pull through and consequently all too often ran out of ideas and tended to repeat their arguments.

The discussion

In this part of the examination the better performing candidates were well informed and aware of current issues, could express their opinions clearly, analyse and justify their points of view with examples or evidence and develop their responses. Some excellent examining was heard from many centres where examiners asked probing questions in no more than two or three follow up areas which allowed their candidates to produce the necessary detail and depth in their responses. All areas introduced for development were well linked and followed a natural course in ensuing discussion.

The following are two good examples for the oral tests noted by our examiners:

Chosen Issue: "A favor de la fractura hidráulica"

Follow up areas: Greenpeace y la función de las ONGs

Ayuda a países en vías de desarrollo

Chosen Issue: 'A favor de la discriminación positiva de las mujeres'

Follow up areas: La publicidad visual y la imagen del cuerpo perfecto
La libertad de prensa - Charlie Hebdo

Occasionally some examiners forgot that discussion entails interaction between two people and instead they simply went through the motions of merely mentioning a topic followed by ¿Qué opinas de ...?, then moving on to a new topic after the candidate had replied, without any follow-up questions or further probing on the issue.

Many unconnected topics were covered and the examinations were more interviews than discussions and resulted in a series of long monologues. This is not what is expected or required.

Very occasionally the examiner interrupted the candidates unnecessarily, talked over them or spoke as much as them not leaving the candidate much room to say anything meaningful and in consequence disadvantaged him/her when it came to judging his/her performance.

Some examiners adopted a clear debating attitude in the second part of the exam, instead of just conducting a discussion.

Examiners must also be aware that questions concerning the candidate's future plans can only be relevant if they lead on to a more in-depth examination of topics like unemployment fears or the value of tourism/ effect of tourism on the environment.

The follow up areas for this part of the examination can be chosen from the Additional General Topic Areas for A2 as well as from the General Topic Area for AS. However for a candidate to access the higher marks, AS topics visited at A2 should be considered in greater depth and answers given to questions should clearly indicate progression from AS to A2. Occasionally teacher examiners conducted the first part of the exam (the debate) correctly but for the second part (the discussion) they asked AS type questions carrying out a re-run of the Unit 1 speaking test and thereby not giving the candidates any chance to develop their response appropriately.

Illustrated below and noted by our examiners are:

- 1- An example of a discussion that illustrates the progression needed from AS to A2. This discussion relates to the use of technology (a common AS topic) linked to unemployment.

T-Tú crees que hay esperanza para los jóvenes, especialmente en España donde hay mucho paro juvenil.

C-Sí, hay esperanza pero no se puede negar que hay un desempleo juvenil. Sin embargo las licencias de las universidades son cada vez más buenas y los jóvenes son cada vez mejor preparados.

T-Pero la tecnología les ha quitado muchos empleos.

C-Sí, pero al mismo también ha añadido muchos empleos tales como las profesiones de la informática, por eso pienso que hay una riqueza de empleos que a veces los jóvenes no sepan que existen. Los jóvenes tienen las habilidades que los mayores no tienen, cuando mi madre era joven no usaban ordenadores. Ahora para todos los trabajos de hoy se necesitan saber de ordenadores.

T-Sin embargo se dice que los jóvenes de hoy pasan todo su tiempo delante del ordenador pero sólo conectados a las redes sociales o a los juegos.

C- Puedes usar Internet para todo, pero hoy en día Internet es la forma más sencilla y práctica de buscar empleos. Para muchos jóvenes es muy bueno porque hay muchos portales anunciando trabajos, puedes escribir directamente a las empresas y enviar tu curriculum. Puedes recibir invitaciones a entrevistas y ofertas de trabajos por emails. También hay que considerar que Internet facilita las relaciones con compañías y trabajos con el extranjero.

- 2- An example of an exam where there was no discourse because the examiner had decided the course of the conversation in advance and did not explore in depth any of the candidate's responses.

Initial issue: En contra de la pena de muerte.

Discussion: Muy bien ahora vamos a pasar a la segunda parte y te voy a hacer unas preguntas sobre los temas que hemos estudiado este año.

-¿Qué opinas de la eutanasia?

-¿Qué opinas de las pruebas científicas en animales?

-Continuando con el tema de la muerte, ¿qué opinas del aborto?

-Ahora para terminar, te voy a hacer dos preguntas sobre la adopción por parejas homosexuales.

- 3- An example of a pre-learned/over rehearsed exam where the teacher prompts the candidate with the words which the candidate has forgotten.

E- ¿Han habido serios problemas con las centrales nucleares ?

C-Claro, que ha habido problemas pero estos son evitables si construimos centrales nucleares donde no existen los terremotos. Así podríamos evitar

E- ¿Evitar siniestro?

C- Evitar siniestros como Fukushima en Japón en 2011.

T- Vivimos en un mundo muy poblado y muchos piensan que hay la posibilidad del error humano.

C- Un estudio muestra un 82% de la gente que vive cerca de la central nuclear dice que no está en contra. Esto me .. pensar que la gente no Creo que debemos fomentar la energía nuclear porque

T- Entonces ¿dices la gente no tiene miedo del error humano?

C- La gente no tiene miedo del error humano porque la tecnología ha avanzado mucho. Creo que debemos fomentar la energía nuclear porque es la mayor forma de producir energía.

- 4- An example of an exam that had suitable A Level questions relating to developing countries.

-¿Tú crees que la pobreza en estos países se debe a la explotación de los países ricos?

-¿Podríamos ayudar más en estas zonas del mundo?

-¿Crees que la ayuda financiera llega siempre a quien más la necesita?

-Muchas compañías crean empleo en estos países porque los sueldos son muy bajos.

¿Tú crees que esto es justo?

Native or near-native speakers

It was noted by our examiners that there were many native or near native speakers taking this examination. However, not all of them scored high marks. This was often

because they had done little or no preparation at all for the examination relying solely on the quality of their spoken language to pull them through. Many candidates were from South America and although there are indeed some differences, for example in vocabulary, depending on the country from which they originate, examiners were aware of these and gave due consideration to all Hispanic alternatives as entirely appropriate.

Suitability of Topics/ Issues

The range of issues chosen for the debate was fairly wide. The most successful ones tended to be those that had a moral and/or ethical dimension and which had several possibilities for development. Some issues chosen for the debate were opinions rather than debatable points and as such could not create a meaningful argument.

As in previous years, the most popular issues were abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration, homosexual marriages, the legalisation of drugs, nuclear energy.

Some other interesting issues presented this year were:

'A favor/ En contra de las ideas de los conservadores/ de los laboristas/ de UKIP' 'A favor de que los jóvenes de 16 años puedan votar' 'A favor de prohibir el uso de armas en USA' 'A favor del tren de alta velocidad en Inglaterra' 'Estoy en contra de la fracturación hidráulica' 'Estoy a favor de los recortes que está haciendo el gobierno' 'A favor de cambiar las leyes sobre la inmigración'. 'En contra de la lotería' 'En contra de la ayuda que se da a países del tercer mundo' 'Los drones son el futuro de la tecnología' 'Contra el derecho al voto de los presos' 'A favor de privatizar el sistema nacional de salud' 'A favor de censurar la prensa (ref Charlie Hebdo),' 'A favor de que las mujeres puedan ser obispos' 'En contra de la comida transgénica' 'A favor de mandar más personal médico para combatir el ébola' 'En contra de la independencia de Cataluña'

Unsuitable issues were those that were not arguable from both sides or ones where the candidate was simply expressing personal opinión, such as : 'Las ventajas y las desventajas de viajar por el mundo', 'A favor de la educación privada para todos', 'Pienso que el arte modern no se toma en serio'

The discussion

Popular current follow-up topics were: The election, terrorism, indoctrination of young people through the Internet, ISIS, Syria, the role of the monarchy, Europe, the economic crisis, climate change, animals used for experimentation, globalisation, the importance of religion nowadays, unemployment, nuclear/renewable energy, and foreign aid.

Quality of language

-Common errors:

Confusion of ser, estar and haber/ saber,conocer/por,para.

Wrong verb endings, infinitives and gerunds.

No verb at all 'no necesario' 'no posible'

Gender of nouns, agreement of adjectives,

Erratic subject/verb agreement

Confusion between nouns and adjectives

-Good candidates stood out with:

Complex sentences with relative pronouns

Use of phrases such as 'ya que', 'entonces', 'por eso', 'por consecuencia', 'no solo eso sino también', 'sobre todo', 'lo que quiero decir es que' 'y además'.

Correct comparatives.

Correct use of pronouns.

Correct and appropriate use of the subjunctive.

Correct verb endings, varied tenses,

Correct use of the reflexive.

Correct prepositions following verbs.

Natural use of conversational joiners like "Lo que pasa es que...." "comprendo lo que dice pero...." "bueno en algunos casos pero en otros es...."

Idiomatic expressions such as 'me saca de quicio', 'me da rabia'

Lexis such as -la fracturación hidráulica/ propagar / colgar páginas web en Internet / la resonancia magnética / suscitar polémica / descartar / restringir / postrado en la cama / las dos caras de la moneda / la fuga de cerebros / el poder adquisitivo / ser propenso a sufrir depresión / las directrices legales / adiestrados / un tema de gran envergadura / precios desorbitados / idolatrar and others.

In some cases the pronunciation of some words, especially those close to the English, gave rise to some difficulty. For example:

difícil..fácil..idea..usan..policía..problema..variedad..sociedad..Europa..eutanasia.

Also the incorrect pronunciations of the silent 'h' For example: alcohol became alcojol, ahorrar became ajorrar,etc.

Some confusion with

-muy/mucho, mayor/mejor and menor

-words such as igualdad, mayoría, controversial, suportivo, serio, las medias, los resultados, los afectos, el mundo tercero, la destinación, las Olímpicas.

-expressions such as es depende, es vale, es necesita, es importancia, es ridículo, es puede, no es importancia, es debe que.

-English verbs given a Spanish ending: restringir, afrontar, acceder, permitir, soportar, promover, resolver.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the language of debate and teachers might like to introduce idioms that aid this kind of dialogue such as:

a mi parecer, a mi modo de ver, estoy convencida que, admito que, yo también lo veo así, además, no solo eso sino también, no se puede negar que, lo que quiero decir es que, hay excepciones, de acuerdo a, según, no comparto este punto de vista, no estoy de acuerdo con lo que dices porque, entiendo lo que dice pero, hay que tener en cuenta que, etc.

Teacher Examiner's performance

Conduct of the examination

Most teacher examiners conducted excellent tests. They had carefully read the oral training guide, the Examiner's report as well as the Teacher/Examiner Handbook and followed all the guidelines. To reward the candidate's ability to understand spoken Spanish these examiners asked clear, uncluttered and yet challenging questions using a variety of structures and lexis. They listened to the detail of what their candidates said and followed their lead.

However in a few cases teacher examiners spoke too much and asked long and some quite convoluted questions, interrupted/ corrected the candidate or, dominated the exchange - this was to the disadvantage of their candidates.

Timing

The specification is clear about the timing required for the Unit 3 exam. In Part 1 - the debate - the candidate should introduce his or her stance for up to 1 minute (it is not essential that the candidate uses the whole minute for this) after which the examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the examiner moves on to the discussion section (Part 2). The whole oral should last between 11 -13 minutes.

Centres are reminded here that it would be unnatural for any discussion to adhere precisely to the quoted timings as there needs to be a smooth transition from one topic to another. Nevertheless the timings of the examination should remain as close as possible to those indicated in the specification.

In the cases where the tests were short the agreed penalty was applied to the test and resulted in a loss of marks. Where tests were too long examiners stopped listening at the end of the next sentence once 13 minutes had passed.

Centre Performance

Recording

Tracks on CD/USB should be clearly labelled.

Labels should not be stuck onto CDs/USBs that impede the function of the medium.

Candidate's number must be entered on the OR form.

Forms must be signed by both candidate and teacher.

CD/USBs should be adequately packed / protective packaging.

The quality of recording should be clear. Occasionally the examiners placed the microphone closer to the teacher examiner rather than to the candidate and as a consequence recordings were difficult to hear.

Candidates should be discouraged from tapping pens, rattling keys or any other noise that interferes with the recording.

Before sending the CD to the examiner it is important that the centre double checks that all recordings are on the disc.

Documentation

A few centres failed to send the attendance registers.

Occasionally the OR forms included 'the stance on the issue' written in English rather than in Spanish as required.

Teacher Examiners:

Advice and Guidance

- Examiners need to observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination.
- Candidates must choose a controversial issue that easily lends itself to debate and they must make sure it is phrased correctly 'Estoy a favor de..' 'Estoy en contra de..'.
.
- Candidates need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments.

- Examiners should challenge the candidate's views so that they are given suitable opportunities to demonstrate their ability to argue their case and justify their opinion. If there is no debate the penalty cap will be applied, as per the Marking guidance sheet.
- Candidates should not be given advance knowledge of the issues to be raised during the examination or learn their answers by heart as this lack of spontaneity will be reflected in the application of the mark scheme. In particular a minimum marks allocation for Response.
- Examiners need to ask sufficiently complex and challenging questions to allow their candidates to access the full range of marks available for Comprehension and Development. Please note questions can be linguistically challenging or conceptually challenging. Complexity can be achieved through the response individual questions require.
- The candidate and the examiner should respond appropriately to each other's input. To reach the full range of the marking criteria there should be frequent examples of spontaneous discourse.
- Examiners must make sure that the second part of the exam is not a re-run of the Unit 1 oral test. For candidates to access the higher marks they must show progression from AS to A2
- Examiners must remember that the second part of the exam is a discussion not a debate.
- Examiners should not introduce too many follow up issues to allow the candidate to produce depth of discussion and development of opinions.
- Centres should not rotate the same two or three issues for all their candidates but rather personalise each examination for each individual candidate.
- Examiners should not correct or finish candidates' responses.
- Examiners should not re-phrase what the candidate has said to clarify meaning or "interpret" what the candidate meant.
- Examples should be given naturally and not explicitly elicited from candidates, unless this occurs naturally in the flow of discussion

Conclusion

The outcome of the examination of this unit this summer was pleasing. The majority of centres had prepared their candidates thoroughly so they had a good understanding of the requirements of this unit. This allowed candidates to respond well to its demands.

Grade Boundaries

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

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>