

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE German (5GN02)
Paper 2A Speaking in German

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GCSE German Paper 2 Speaking in German Examiner Report

General

This session Moderators listened to some imaginative, creative and interesting orals and they were impressed by the level of performance and achievement of many of the students entered. There were natural conversations with evidence of interaction and spontaneity and the range of vocabulary and structures used by many students was excellent. Teachers are once again to be congratulated on managing the process effectively and putting their students at ease during the orals.

Tasks

Centres have a choice of 3 tasks:

1. a presentation and discussion
2. a picture-based discussion
3. an open interaction

Each student must undertake at least 2 of these 3 task types but only one has to be recorded and submitted, although centres are asked to submit in the moderation sample recordings of at least two different task types for which they are submitting marks across the whole centre cohort.

Although the majority of centres once again opted for the presentation and discussion and picture-based discussion, there was a pleasing number of centres who undertook an open interaction task.

Centres create their own task sheets for the presentation and discussion & the picture-based discussion – there are no Edexcel set tasks for these 2 options. Whilst most centres provided their students with a task sheet, some centres did not. Students in these centres had just a title e.g. *My school*. Since all tasks have to be refreshed every 2 years, the best tasks consist of a title with 5 or so bullet points to guide and support students: the task can then be refreshed at the end of 2 years by changing at least one of these bullet points. If the task is 'just' a title, this title may not be used after 2 years. The assessment criteria require students to demonstrate spontaneity, an ability to interact and to deal with unpredictable elements. Thus task sheets with a defined list of questions to prepare will not allow students to access the higher mark bands. Students tended to excel when bullet points included an element of originality, e.g.

- How the German music scene differs from the British.

For the picture-based discussion, centres should note that the Specification states on p16 that the picture is intended to be used as a 'prompt to discussion'. The ensuing discussion must therefore start from the student's picture. The spirit of this task type is that students will bring in their own picture, rather than all being given the same one. Some of the pictures which moderators saw (e.g. a single person in a blank landscape) did not lend themselves to much description at all and students should bear in mind the need for the picture to provide material as a prompt for discussion when making their selection.

Some centres undertaking the open interaction created their own stimuli and tasks whilst others customised ones from the Edexcel bank in order to develop a situation that suited the interests of their own students. The best open interaction tasks have a stimulus to support students – however, teachers should note that any such stimulus should not exceed 70 words. (p33 of the Specification: the stimulus may contain visual prompts in addition to the 70 words of either English or German). There is no word limit for the task but you are advised to set concise tasks.

Very few centres differentiated their tasks to cater for the different levels of students – most centres gave all students the same task which differentiated by outcome. This was not always a positive experience for students. Students in the same teaching group do not all have to do the same task. Teachers may start with a common task but then modify e.g. 2 or 3 versions to correspond to the ability level of different students within the group.

Themes

Centres and students are free to choose their own themes for the orals: 4 themes have been identified by Edexcel (p9 of the Specification) but these are not prescriptive. Students may undertake both tasks on the same theme if they wish although there should be no direct overlap of content. Holidays (generally as a picture based discussion) and school (generally as a presentation and discussion) continue to be the most popular topics, as does the role of the media in students' lives – e.g. use of smartphones or computers, including Skype. This session, the topic of the environment was frequently exploited and by a wide range of students. This often proved beneficial in terms of the range of language as students used some excellent vocabulary most proficiently. Conversely, some centres with more able students offered presentations on more restrictive topics such as *Meine Familie* or *Mein Haus*. For more able students, topics should be chosen which allow the use of more sophisticated vocabulary and which lend themselves to a range of structures and tenses.

Conduct

In general, the orals were well conducted and allowed students to achieve their best. Skilful and appropriate questioning from the teacher-examiner afforded students the opportunities to fulfil their potential in line with the criteria.

Unfortunately, for all three task types, there were centres where teacher-examiners relied on a bank of questions and so all students were asked more or less the same questions. These questions did not always follow on logically from one another. Teachers should be mindful that more able students are disadvantaged by such an approach since there is a need for students to speak spontaneously, to interact and to deal with unpredictable elements in order to access the higher mark bands. Tailoring the questions to students' responses is the best way to ensure spontaneity and genuine interaction. Thus students did best when teacher-examiners asked questions that followed on from what the student had just said and the unpredictable questions were frequently those which elicited more information or clarification.

In addition, teacher examiners should ask questions appropriate to the level of the student being examined. In this way, they can afford more able students opportunities to express a range of ideas and points of view and to demonstrate a range of more complex structures and vocabulary. Similarly, weaker students have the opportunity to respond to more modest questions using language which they are able to manipulate. This session, many less able students were asked some very difficult questions, often in a range of tenses, where a simpler line of questioning would have instead enabled them to access higher marks for Content and Response.

Unfortunately, some students were asked too many closed questions. This was particularly disappointing when the student was capable and clearly able to produce extended answers but, when faced with closed questions in the stressful environment of the oral, frequently resorted to yes/no answers. In general, closed questions should be avoided in favour of more open-ended questions as these latter lead to a stronger student performance.

Some teacher examiners asked repetitive questions e.g. on the theme of family: *Kannst du deinen Vater beschreiben? Und kannst du deine Schwester beschreiben?* Such a strategy will limit the outcomes for more able students.

Presentation and Discussion

In the presentation and discussion task type students must give an **uninterrupted** presentation which lasts between **1 minute minimum** and **3 minutes maximum**. (The clock starts ticking when the student starts speaking.) Presentations which fall short of the 1 minute minimum time allocation will incur a 2 mark deduction from the Content and Response grid. Unfortunately, some teacher examiners did not allow their students to speak for at least 1 minute before interrupting them to ask a question - consequently these presentations were too short. Some weaker students were unable to sustain a presentation lasting 1 minute and teachers should consider whether the other 2 task types might not be more appropriate for such students. Centres should be reassured that e.g. 90 seconds is an adequate amount of time for the presentation part of the task - long presentations could mean less time for the more interactive, spontaneous part of the task.

Many students performed well here and were a pleasure to listen to. Other students had prepared their presentation thoroughly and were able to perform well but then had little left for the interaction. The presentation section allows students to fulfil certain assessment criteria and the discussion section allows them to fulfil others. It is therefore crucial to ensure that both sections are well represented and accomplished. Sometimes the follow up questions covered exactly the same ground as that in the presentation, which led to students using the same language and repeating information already given rather than taking the conversation forward, expanding on detail and opinion or taking the conversation in a new direction. Often when the teacher-examiner asked a question about something the student had already stated in the presentation, this frequently caused hesitation and confusion.

A presentation followed by a sequence of well-rehearsed questions and answers will not allow students to access the higher assessment bands – within the constraints of an assessment, we are looking for spontaneity, interaction and an ability to deal with unpredictable questions.

The Picture Based discussion

Once again, this was a very popular choice with centres and many students were clearly motivated by being able to bring in their own picture which often led to very individual performances. Students may give a presentation (**maximum of 1 minute**) but they do not have to - in this session, the vast majority opted to do so. It bears repeating that the picture is a 'prompt to discussion' so the oral must start from the student's picture. Sometimes, the picture was not referred to at all – by either student or the teacher examiner. Since the assessment criteria for Content and Response refer specifically to *information related to the chosen visual* this will have had an impact on the marks available to such students. However, in most cases, a short presentation or brief discussion on the photo or picture led on to wider conversation which was interesting to listen to. Pictures of a holiday, a hobby or a favourite celebrity were popular and students frequently spoke with great enthusiasm.

Open Interaction

Whilst many teachers have realised the full potential of this task, this continues to be the lesser-chosen task option. Performance once again fell into two categories.

Where the task was exploited correctly, students of **all** levels were able to engage in a spontaneous role-play type dialogue. There were some truly excellent performances e.g. students being interviewed for a job, in a tourist office responding to a tourist asking for information on the local area, in a leisure centre, at a hotel reception. Well-structured Open Interaction tasks encouraged high scores in the Content and Response grid due to the level of genuine interaction. Moderators felt that the Open Interaction task often allowed weaker students to achieve better marks, as it could offer more support in the stimulus.

Unfortunately, many teachers conducted this task as a question and answer session – a general conversation rather than an unscripted role-play scenario in response to a stimulus. Some tasks set did not give rise to an unscripted role-play - situations such as *You are being interviewed by your German exchange partner about school* or *You are talking with your exchange partner about your lifestyle* did not work well at all as there was no obvious role-play situation and these turned into general discussions on school and lifestyle. Centres are advised that there is no 'general conversation' task type in this Specification and conducting the Open Interaction task in this way will have implications for the mark which can be awarded for Content and Response due to the lack of interaction.

There is an expectation in the Open Interaction that students will ask the teach-examiner questions and the vast majority of tasks reminded students of the need to do so. It was unfortunate that some students forgot to ask questions and were not prompted by their teacher examiner to do so – it is acceptable for teachers to prompt students in this respect e.g. *hast du/Haben Sie Fragen für mich?* Centres should refer to the *Marking Guidance* for details on how to apply the assessment criteria in such instances. Moderators have noted a trend for the student to ask the questions at the end of the exchange. Whilst this is fine in theory, in practice this limits the opportunities for interaction. Best practice would indicate that student questions which are woven into the body of the oral lead to better exchanges.

Timings

Each oral task must last between 4 and 6 minutes - this range affords flexibility to suit different students. The majority of orals conformed to the timings requirement. Centres should be aware that moderators stop moderating after 6 minutes and any material beyond that will not be considered for assessment. This ensures an even playing field for all students. At the other end of the time scale, 4 minutes may represent too long a time for weaker students and orals which last 3'30" will be tolerated. However, anything less than this will be considered short and in the case of a short oral 2 marks will be deducted from the student's score in the Content and Response grid, as per the *Marking Guidelines*. Centres should note that in order to access the full mark range, the oral must last between 4 and 6 minutes. An oral which lasts only 3'30" will not be able to access the full mark range.

In the presentation and discussion task, students give a presentation which must last between 1 minute minimum and 3 minutes maximum. Presentations which fall short of the 1 minute minimum time allocation will also incur a 2 mark deduction from the Content and Response grid. Many centres had not deducted these 2 marks in those cases where the student's presentation fell short of the required minimum time.

In the picture based discussion task type, students may give a presentation but they do not have to. If they do choose to start off with a presentation,

this may last a maximum of 1 minute (whereby anything up to the one minute is acceptable).

Recordings

One recorded exemplar per student in the moderation sample should be sent to moderators. Centres submitted recordings on CDs and USB sticks (with orals recorded as both mp3 files and music/audio files).

Centres should check their recordings before sending off the samples. There were some poor quality recordings which were almost inaudible. In addition, whilst it is not necessary to conduct the orals one-on-one in a dedicated room, there is a need for minimal background noise so that the student being examined can be heard. Some students recorded in a classroom situation were very difficult to hear due to high levels of background noise. Moderators received CDs and USB sticks which did not contain all the required recordings. It is important to check for compatibility and details of accepted digital formats (.mp3 (at least 192 kbit/s), .wav, .wma) are listed in the Administrative support guide.

Centres are kindly requested to include with the CDs or USBs a track list – detailing centre number, student name and number, language and series details. It would help moderators tremendously if the task type were indicated next to the student's name. It also avoids confusion if details of both student name and number are announced clearly at the start of each oral – teacher examiners at some centres started the oral without identifying the student at all which made it very difficult for the moderators to know which student they were listening to. Where orals have been recorded as music/audio files, it would be helpful to moderators if centres could write the relevant track number on the CM2 form.

All recordings will be returned to Centres.

Marking

Teacher examiners generally showed a good understanding of the assessment criteria and were able to differentiate performances among their students. In centres with more than one teacher involved in the assessments, there was often clear evidence of internal standardisation.

Unfortunately, there were centres whose marks needed adjustment.

Content and Response:

These centres tended to overvalue their students' performance here. The assessment criteria are applied globally on a best-fit basis and the ability to interact well with the teacher examiners and respond spontaneously to unpredictable questions is necessary to attain marks in the higher mark bands. Pre-learnt 'conversations' which consist of a question and answer session but lack interaction or do not evidence an ability to expand or take the initiative cannot be rewarded with top marks. Thus marks were incorrectly awarded in the 16 – 18 band in cases where the student gave extended, informative answers which had clearly been pre-learnt but where they did not show any spontaneity or ability to respond to unpredictable questions. Marks were awarded too generously in the 12 – 15 band for students who answered a lot of questions but tended to give short answers or who were too hesitant.

On the other hand, the weakest students were often under-marked in this section. Students who had given a decent amount of information albeit it in short simple sentences and were able to maintain the conversation for 4 minutes were still put in the 1-3 band when they deserved to be in the 4 – 7 band.

Range of Language and Accuracy:

The Range of Language grid rewards students for the breadth or range of language used. Tenses other than the present must be used in order to have the opportunity to access the 5 mark band and many students are well trained by teachers to include different tenses. Sometimes, however, use of tenses was given priority over the use of a variety of structures and vocabulary: students were able to speak in three tenses, but use only short sentences and simple vocabulary. Teachers should be aware then that the demonstration of a good grasp of the tenses alone does not mean students will automatically score a mark of 5 – they do need to demonstrate wide range of structures and good and varied vocabulary as well.

When awarding the mark for Accuracy it is important to note that the mere lack of error does not mean the student will score highly. The student must attempt to use more complex structures to reach 5 and there must be generally good pronunciation and intonation.

Some centres based their marks for both Content and Response and Language on the information given and level of language used by a student in the presentation without acknowledging that this was not sustained in the ensuing discussion. Marks awarded for all 3 grids are awarded globally across the whole performance.

Administration

Many centres completed the administration admirably. Others had omitted to include vital documents but responded quickly to moderators' requests for material.

Centres should refer to the *Administrative support guide (Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination and Controlled Assessments)* available on the website as this details exactly which materials should be sent to the moderator.

Centres should not send more than the one oral per student to which they wish moderators to listen i.e. only those recordings which are to be moderated. The students required for moderation are identified with an asterisk by Edexcel, but centres should ensure that they send their **highest** performing and their **lowest** performing students on the 2A task in addition to the requested sample. In this case, *the highest and lowest scoring students* refers to the 2A task only it does not refer to the overall scores i.e. not the total scores across both tasks.

There is some misunderstanding of what constitutes the 2A task. The 2A task is **not** necessarily the task centres conduct first, and the 2B task is not necessarily the task which centres conduct second. The 2A task is the task which has been recorded and for which a recording will be available to send to the Edexcel moderator if requested. The 2A task should **not** be the same for all students in the centre: centres will need to send at least 2 different task types in the sample for moderation. It is not a requirement to record the 2B task, although many centres do record everything. Thus, if a centre records all students undertaking all task types, it will be necessary for the centre to designate which task is task 2A for each student and which task is task 2B. If centres record only task 2A, then they should note that they will have to record some students doing one task type and other students undertaking a different task type.

Moderators will moderate the 2A task only. They do not moderate the 2B task. Consequently, centres should not send to moderators any recordings or paperwork relating to the 2B task.

Student mark sheets

The Code of Practice requires that assessment evidence provided by students has been authenticated. The **CM2** form has a double function: it is the form on which the tasks (including a short description of the picture) and centre awarded marks are recorded, but it is also the authenticity form and **must** be signed by both student and teacher. Unfortunately, lots of forms were not signed by either the student or the teacher and signatures had to be requested. Before despatch, centres should check that these forms have been signed by both parties. The CM2 form replaces the old *Authenticity record sheet* and is available as an appendix in the Administrative support guide referred to above. In addition, the CM2 form

has a box with Y/N which allows teachers very easily to indicate whether the CA2 form has been used by this student.

CA2 forms

The CA2 form is the pro forma on which students may write up to 30 words of notes and make 5 small drawings. Printed images (e.g. photos or pictures from magazines) are not allowed.

Students may take this form into the oral with them so it is one of the controls. If students used this form during the oral, then moderators must see it to check exactly what support students had. Some centres did not include the CA2 forms nor did they circle the *N* on the CM2 form nor did they include any statement to the effect that their students had not used CA2 forms. If students decide they do not wish to use this form, moderators must have a signed document to this effect.

Students who used a CA2 form did not always use it to their best advantage, especially weaker students. Complex vocabulary items were often listed, but it was apparent that students did not know how to pronounce them, and consequently communication was impaired. A list of 30 discrete lexical items may not represent the most helpful use of this form. It is strongly recommended that students do not write full sentences – this uses up the 30 words very easily. Centres should spend some time discussing with their students how the allowed 30 words can best support them during the speaking tasks.

Centres are reminded that the CA2 form allows a maximum of 30 words. CA2 forms with more than 30 words not only give students an unfair advantage but also contravene the allowed controls.

Task sheets

It is very difficult for moderators to moderate a student's performance if they do not have access to the task used in the assessment. A copy of each task used in the moderation sample must be sent to the moderator – even if the task was just a title.

The task sheet should be just that: a task with no reminders to use a range of tense, express opinions etc. Such reminders should be achieved via the bullet points e.g. *mention an activity you did last week* (which will encourage past tense), *say why this was enjoyable* (which will encourage opinions and reasons) etc.

For the Picture based discussion task, it is not essential to enclose the picture. However, there is a space on the CM2 form for the student (or the teacher examiner) to write a short description of what was in the picture. This is very helpful to moderators and centres are respectfully reminded to complete this part of the form.

General

Moderators would request that centres do not to send student materials in plastic wallets. The best way to submit work is to collate each student's materials and then use a treasury tag.

Moderators felt that moderation went most smoothly where centres had followed the checklist on page 22 of the Administrative support guide:

For each student in the sample:

- Recording of task 2A
- Task/stimulus
(Task sheets for each sampled student are not required if 'common tasks' have been set, although an explanatory note should indicate this. If certain 'common tasks' have been amended in some way to cater for different learners in the sample, then please submit all versions of these.)
- Student Mark Sheet (CM2)
- Student Notes Form (CA2).

For the centre:

- Second copy of the 2A OPTEMS form (bottom copy to be kept by the centre) or the Edexcel Online printout
- The 2A work of the highest scoring student and lowest scoring student, if not already included in the sample
- CD / USB / Cassette Track listing for each student.

GCSE Modern Foreign Languages – Main Taught

Unit 2: Speaking

Tests should last between 4 and 6 minutes.

Tests which are too short: < less than 3'30" - so 3'29" is too short:

- Automatic deduction of 2 marks on the Content and Response grid.
- There is no adjustment applied to either Range or Accuracy.

Test which are too long: > more than 6 minutes:

- Once the 6 minutes have passed, stop listening and assessing at the end of the next sentence.

Test which are a monologue and have no interaction:

- Candidates cannot score more than 7 marks for Content and Response.
- This does not affect the marks for either Range or Accuracy.

Open interaction tasks only:

- If a candidate asks only one question in a task that requires 2 or more – deduct 1 mark from the Content and Response.
- If a candidate asks no questions in a task where questions are required – deduct 2 marks from the Content and Response.
- The other two assessment criteria will not be affected.

Presentation and Discussion

- The presentation must last between 1 – 3 mins (max). If the presentation is shorter than 1 min deduct 2 marks for Content and Response.
- Where no presentation takes place, candidates can only score a maximum of 11 for content and response.

Although interaction is important in all three task types, there is no requirement for candidates to ask questions in the Presentation and discussion or in the Picture-based discussion task options.

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>

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