

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Spanish (5SP02/2A)
Paper 2A: Speaking in Spanish

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GCSE Spanish

Unit 2: Speaking in Spanish

Moderator Report

In general, centres had prepared their candidates well and the tests were conducted professionally and encouragingly by the Teacher Examiners. Last year the Open Interaction task types were the least popular but this year more candidates had chosen to opt for the Open Interaction with a significant number offering Presentations and fewer Picture-Based discussions. The main topics selected were: Holidays, School, Free Time, Work Experience and Healthy Living. Holidays and Work Experience clearly provide opportunities for the Teacher Examiner to ensure a variety of tenses and this may go some way to accounting for their popularity.

A number of teacher examiners are still reliant on a pre-set list of questions and there were many examples of candidates knowing exactly what they were going to be asked and memorising answers which were delivered without expression. It is important to remember that this absence of spontaneity can prevent a candidate from accessing the higher mark bands, where one of the descriptors makes it quite clear that moderators are listening for evidence of a candidate who '*Speaks very confidently and with clear spontaneity*'. Simply asking one question after another in a sequence used for each candidate in the centre without listening to the individual candidate's replies and building on them to develop a natural conversation will not offer any evidence of spontaneity and therefore marks will be coloured accordingly. There were even examples of candidates answering a question they had not yet been asked but which was clearly next on the list. Similarly intonation, pronunciation and emphasis are clear signals that betray candidates who are obviously reading or reciting something that they do not understand. On the positive side, however, there were several strong candidates who took the opportunity to develop their responses fully and to show initiative in leading the conversation in a natural and forthcoming manner.

OPEN INTERACTIONS

This year there was a significant increase in the variety of topics offered, although some such as School do not lend themselves well to Open Interaction but would have been better submitted as Presentations. Open Interactions should involve some element of negotiation or transaction and there were too many examples of general conversations, for example the teacher examiner simply asking the candidate details about school and school life. Open Interactions work much better if the candidates and the teacher examiners begin with clearly defined roles set against a scenario that invites transaction or negotiation, for instance with a shop assistant, a waiter or waitress or a Spanish visitor. Shorter responses, possibly designed with weaker candidates in mind, were most prevalent in Open Interactions but nevertheless there were some good opportunities made available for

meaningful dialogues and where set questions and rehearsed answers were avoided, access to the higher mark bands was open to the better candidates. The Specification makes it quite clear that candidates are expected to ask a question or questions during the Open Interaction task and several centres failed to make this clear on the stimulus given to their candidates. It should be remembered that if a candidate fails to ask any questions during an Open Interaction then marks are automatically deducted from Content and Response only, a marking principle that has been agreed across all the languages at GCSE. Occasionally candidates fulfilled their brief and asked appropriate questions but at times this led to extended responses from the teacher examiner who effectively took unnecessary time away from the candidates. It is essential that teacher examiners keep their input to a minimum while still maintaining the spirit of a good natured dialogue.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations were again a popular choice of task type, mainly covering Holidays, Educational Visits or Work Experience, although additional favourite topics included Celebrities, Sports Stars, Films and occasionally Books. The Specification again makes it clear that candidates are expected to deliver their Presentations for between 1 and 3 minutes before the teacher examiner interrupts and initiates the subsequent interaction. The timing begins when the candidate starts the Presentation and ends when the teacher asks a question. A significant problem this year lay with teacher examiners interrupting well before 1 minute had elapsed and this led to an automatic deduction of 2 marks for Content and Response only, again a principle that has been agreed across all the languages. There were several examples of candidates who took a genuine interest in the topics they had chosen to present and who delivered their opening presentations with confidence and fluency. However many of the presentations were clearly pre-learnt and recited, sometimes at breakneck speed, and the following interaction with the teacher examiner suddenly flagged and began to reveal the true ability of the candidate. One noticeable aspect was that a few teachers had obviously chosen the topics themselves and all the candidates from these centres attempted exactly the same topic and task. The teachers presented some as 2a and others as 2b to give an appearance of variety. Presentations are much more effective if the candidates choose the topics themselves and show genuine interest in what they are talking about. Occasionally the presentations went on beyond 3 minutes, allowing little time for the interaction with the teacher examiner. This practice disadvantages the candidates who need to demonstrate their abilities in interaction which is one of the descriptors in the marking grid. Equal time should be allowed for both the presentation and the following interaction to give the candidates the best chance of accessing the higher marks.

PICTURE BASED DISCUSSIONS

Common topics for picture based tasks were once again Family, My Town and Holidays and the most common centre devised option was School and Education. Very similar themes emerged on types of school, favourite lessons and teachers, comparisons with primary schools and expectations of future education and careers, providing opportunities to demonstrate a good range of past, present and future tenses with the occasional conditional and subjunctive. There was a noticeable trend towards including planned subjunctives this year, for instance *si + tuviera* but occasionally subjunctives were brought in inappropriately, for example *yo quiero que vaya a la Universidad*. Most centres are now indicating on the CM2 succinct details of the picture used by the candidates during the test and this is important information for the moderator if the original picture stimulus is not submitted. The pictures often led to a relaxed discussion in which candidates felt comfortable with familiar information. Candidates may choose to begin the test with a brief presentation on the picture they have chosen but there is no requirement for them to do so and it is perfectly acceptable for the teacher examiner to begin the test with a simple question that refers directly to the picture, for instance '*¿Por qué has escogido esta foto?*' or '*¿Quiénes son las personas en la foto?*' Many teachers demonstrated good examining practice by asking open questions and questions that prompted their candidates to demonstrate their abilities over a wide range of vocabulary, structures and tenses.

CONVERSATIONS

Most conversations were timed within the specified parameters although in some cases the tests continued beyond 6 minutes, in one case for 10 minutes. Centres should remember that moderators stop listening to the tests at the end of the first sentence when 6 minutes has passed and if the candidate has been allowed to deliver a monologue for, say, 5 minutes only 1 minute is left for the moderator to assess their ability in general conversation and the marking is affected proportionately. There were too many examples of candidates from the same centre being asked exactly the same questions in the same sequence and giving similar or in some cases identical replies. The teacher examiner is clearly using a pre-set bank of questions and the candidates are offering rehearsed answers. This practice limits the opportunity to demonstrate spontaneity and unpredictability and therefore restricts access to the higher mark bands. Pronunciation was at times an issue and pronunciation of common Spanish words at times tended to be influenced by written notes. In particular '*que*' was often heard as '*cu*' and there were several examples of highly anglicized versions of '*biología*', '*social*', '*jugar*' (at its worst in the present or preterite tenses), '*creo*', '*hay*' (with the '*h*' pronounced), '*gente*' '*(co)media*' and '*idea*'. Weaker candidates frequently pronounced the '*ñ*' as '*n*', especially in '*niño*' and unfortunately in '*años*'. The mysterious '*n*' in '*ayudar*' (*ayundar*) made its annual appearance – perhaps an influence from '*desayunar*' – as did confusion between '*ciudad*'

and '*cuidad*'. Occasionally ordinal numbers were pluralized and consequently '*cuatros*' and '*ochos*' surfaced briefly, surprisingly with higher scoring candidates. Finally, the perennial '*fui*'/'*fue*' confusion and ambiguity was also prevalent.

ADMINISTRATION

Administration was carried out efficiently by most centres, although it is still essential that examination officers and teachers double check that the recordings work and that the candidate can be clearly heard. It is important to position the microphone so that it favours the candidate rather than the teacher examiner. Similarly it is essential to check that the paperwork is in order before dispatching to the moderator. Again this year we had unit 4 written scripts sent to the unit 2 oral moderators and no doubt the writing moderators would have been surprised to receive recordings. A few centres failed to send the stimulus for each type of task conducted in the sample but the centres concerned were very helpful in providing these omissions promptly when contacted by the moderator. There were some instances of arithmetical errors where the marks awarded on the CM2 did not correspond with the mark entered on the Optems as well as errors made in totalling the marks on the CM2. It is important to double check the arithmetic as a good deal of unnecessary time can be spent contacting the centre concerned and then ensuring that the correct marks are fed into the system. It is also very important to make sure that the oral tests are recorded in quiet surroundings; external noises, for instance from the playground outside the window, do not help the moderator and can seriously distract the candidates. Most centres with more than one teacher examiner managed to standardise their marking within the centre, although there were a few examples of one teacher's marking differing considerably from the other colleagues and if one set of marks is out of tolerance, this can affect the marks for the entire centre. Finally, some centres need to be reminded that they must include a variety of task types within the sample they submit for moderation.

The following is recommended good practice for the administration and conduct of recordings:

- A track list detailing candidates' names and numbers, task titles and task types
- Audio files named fully with all the details as above
- Announcement by the teacher examiner of centre name and number, candidate name, task type and task title at the beginning of each recording
- Ensuring that task types announced correspond to the task types ticked on the CM2
- Ensuring that there is a mix of task types in the sample sent to the moderator
- Accurate timing of 4 – 6 minutes for each oral test
- Accurate timing of between 1 – 3 minutes for Presentations leaving a sufficiently balanced amount of time for the interaction

- Accurate timing of no more than 1 minute for the candidates if they choose to introduce the picture for the Picture Based Discussion
- Reminding Open Interaction candidates on the stimulus that they must ask questions during the test
- Avoiding the use of dependence on pre-set questions and answers and instead creating a natural spontaneous dialogue
- Asking open questions that prompt candidates to use a range of tenses
- Ensuring opportunity for unpredictability – i.e. asking questions that are not covered by the bullet points on the stimulus

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