

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

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

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Publications Code 5SP02_2A_1606_ER

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GCSE Spanish

Unit 2: Speaking in Spanish

Moderator Report

Candidates for this summer's exam had generally prepared well and the oral tests were conducted professionally and sympathetically by most Teacher Examiners. The questions asked were generally open-ended and gave ample opportunity for the candidates to show their ability by extending their answers and demonstrating a variety of structures, vocabulary, verb forms and tenses. However, in most cases the language was rote-learned and there was comparatively little evidence of spontaneous exchange. There were fewer problems over timing of the tests although some Presentations lasted for less than a minute before the Teacher Examiner interrupted with a question. As a consequence, 2 marks were automatically deducted from Content and Response, in line with the marking principles agreed across all modern languages. The most popular task type was the Presentation, where the most popular topics were school, holidays, leisure, my town, self and family and work experience. Picture-based discussions came a close second where once more holidays were the most popular topic, although healthy living was also popular with images of social problems such as drinking, smoking, obesity or drugs. The Open Interactions proved to be least popular and several of them would have worked better as Presentations or Picture-based Discussions since there was no evidence of transaction or negotiation. The most successful were job interviews.

Presentation

Too many of the Presentations delivered by the candidates were straightforward monologues which then extended into a question and answer exercise with the Teacher Examiner rather than a spontaneous discussion. A number of Teacher Examiners relied heavily on a bank of questions which were repeated throughout the examination with each of the other candidates. The candidates would then often produce similar or identical pre-learned and rehearsed responses to those questions which meant that it was difficult to find any evidence of spontaneity or unpredictability. There were even some examples of candidates answering questions that were next on the list rather than the one they were being asked. The absence of spontaneity or unpredictability effectively prevents a candidate from accessing the higher marks for Content and Response. Sometimes the candidate's intonation would suggest that he or she was simply repeating the prepared responses in such a manner that it demonstrated little or no understanding of the language. For instance, '¡Qué horror!' or '¡Qué suerte!' delivered in an expressionless monotone reveals the lack of genuine feeling or enthusiasm for what is being said. Some Presentations went on too long, at times beyond 4 minutes, exhausting both stamina and material and leaving little opportunity for the candidates to demonstrate their ability to interact with the Teacher Examiner. Once again, there was often a clear contrast between

the confident recital of pre-learnt material in the opening Presentation and the less confident interactions with the Teacher Examiner in which some candidates struggled to express their ideas in coherent, accurate Spanish.

Picture-Based Discussion

This task type tended to lead to more relaxed and spontaneous discussions because questions such as ¿Quién es esta persona en la foto? encouraged candidates to talk about themselves and their families without relying on a prepared response. It also gave the Teacher Examiner more scope for developing a natural, spontaneous conversation.

However, while the ensuing questions elicited information in tenses other than the present, candidates should be aware that to achieve higher marks for Range of Language they would need to go beyond 'fui', 'comí' and 'bebí' for example. The pictures or photographs when chosen by the candidates rather than by the Teacher Examiner gave the candidates greater ownership of the task and they could talk about it with more personal interest and enthusiasm. At times the picture or a description of it was not sent to the Moderator; it is important for the Moderator to have a clear idea of the starting point for this task and either the picture or a description of it must be included in the paperwork. On a few occasions no reference at all was made to the picture; it is important to remember that the picture must be used as a starting point before the conversation opens out to explore wider aspects of the topic area. Failure to make reference to the picture is an omission and will have an impact on the mark for Content and Response.

Open Interaction

The Open Interactions were largely conducted efficiently by the Teacher Examiners who were aware of the need for the candidate to ask a question or two and prompted the candidates who perhaps had forgotten to do so. Two questions should be enough but it is important that centres include this requirement – ie 'You must ask a question' or 'You must ask questions' – on the stimulus given to candidates for their preparation. At the other end of the scale, there were examples of candidates delivering a monologue interspersed with up to eleven questions put to the Teacher Examiner who answered them but took no opportunity to ask any questions of the candidate. As a result there was reaction but no interaction and the Content and Response mark was accordingly reduced. There were too many prepared and rehearsed Open Interaction tests where some centres treated the task as a Presentation and omitted any evidence of spontaneity. Indeed, several of the Open Interactions would have worked better as Presentations since there was no evidence of negotiation or transaction; general conversation is not appropriate as an Open Interaction task. Unpredictability was also at times an issue. It should be remembered that the Moderators look closely at the stimulus given to the candidates and check through the bullet points as they are covered one by one. Anything in the conversation that does not appear

as a bullet point is therefore considered to be unpredictable. Teachers should also ensure that their own participation is kept to a minimum; there were some instances of teachers talking at length and interrupting their candidates unnecessarily. This is unhelpful and takes precious time away from the candidates.

Marking of the candidates' work

Most centres are now very familiar with the exam and the marking was both accurate and consistent. Where two or more Teacher Examiners were involved, it was good to see that standardisation had been conducted internally and that the Teacher Examiners were applying the same interpretation of the assessment grids. Sometimes the marks awarded for Content and Response were too generous, given the lack of spontaneity and unpredictability. At other times the Language marks were too high, perhaps because of the lack of variety in tenses or because of the poor pronunciation and intonation, which often occurs with rehearsed monologues. Some candidates had clearly been told to include a subjunctive and did not fully understand how it worked. For example, 'Espero que vaya a la universidad' instead of 'Espero ir a la universidad' exemplified this problem. Other common errors included the use of 'gustar' – mi gusta, mi madre gusta – 'preferir' – mi prefiero – the pronunciation of 'g' in gente, generalmente, gimnasio – and the use of infinitives rather than conjugated tenses. The confusion between 'fui' and 'fue' continues to be a problem and affects the marks for Content and Response, Range of Language or Accuracy by introducing ambiguity. Pronunciation problems presented difficulties with 'j', 'll' and 'q' consonants whilst 'que' was often pronounced 'cu' and the perennial mispronunciation of 'hay' also featured.

General comments

A number of the tests across all three task types were conducted exclusively or primarily in the present tense, affording the candidates little or no opportunity to demonstrate their competence with different verb tenses or time frames. This practice will affect the marks awarded for Range of Language and Teacher Examiners must endeavour to ask questions that will direct their candidates to frame responses in tenses other than the present. Centres must also be aware of the need to include a variety of task types in the sample sent to the Moderator. A worrying number of centres ignored this requirement and sent only one task type; when the Moderators contacted the centres concerned to request samples of other task types, they were often informed that the second tasks had not been recorded and therefore could not be sent. Several Moderators had to telephone or e-mail their centres to request missing materials or to report discrepancies. Several centres had made arithmetical errors which had been transcribed to the OPTEMs form, others had failed to send a picture or a description for the Picture Based Discussion tasks, there were some missing descriptions of task types for

Presentations and Open Interactions, and a few had even failed to send recordings of their candidates' work. A few centres sent recordings for task 2B that did not match the correct paperwork for 2A. Some Moderators experienced considerable problems with incomplete paperwork or serious mistakes, especially in the transcription of marks. It is essential to check through the paperwork before sending it all to the Moderator as discrepancies such as these are unnecessarily time consuming and stressful to deal with. The recordings were mainly clear but occasionally they were faint and difficult to listen to. It is important to test the volume prior to recording and to ensure that the microphone favours the candidate rather than the Teacher Examiner. It is also essential to ensure that the tests are carried out in as quiet an environment as possible; slamming of doors, bells ringing, children and teachers shouting and other extraneous noises have an adverse effect on the concentration and performance of some candidates. However, the majority of centres should be congratulated on their careful conduct of the exams and the meticulous preparation and checking of materials.

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