



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

1SP0 Paper 2H

Higher tier: Speaking in Spanish

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A smooth year for the speaking component as centres become more familiar with the three required tasks. The majority of candidates were reportedly entered for the correct tier. Teacher Examiners and students alike proved themselves to be prepared, controlled and professional. Largely, Teachers introduced the centre and candidate details, used the sequencing grid to allocate role plays and photo cards and introduced the themes during the general conversation. It is always enormously beneficial to have this information prior to opening the audio, in order for examiners to prepare the appropriate cards in advance of listening and assessing. There were the odd centres where there was no introduction at all, the examiner relying on the paperwork to identify candidate name and numbers and themes/cards. The administration showed a huge improvement this year, with many centres using the updated editable version of the CS2 forms. Some centres were contacted for missing forms and/or audios.

There were a few occasions where Examiners realised that they had begun the wrong role play and so redid this task, sometimes up to three times. The first offering is the one we assess. Also, there was a small number of cases where the incorrect tier for either the RP or the PC were carried out. In other words, a Higher candidate had the correct role play and general conversation length but the Photo Card was a Foundation card, with the less challenging questions in bullet points 2-5. In a handful of cases, both cards presented to the candidate were of the incorrect tier and some candidates even being given last year's cards. Please check this information carefully prior to beginning the recording.

As a rule, candidates attempted all aspects of the exam well and the expectations of the questions on the role plays and picture-based tasks were seemingly clear. Many teachers used the permitted prompts in these tasks, such as ¿algo más? and ¿por qué (no)? where necessary. Most students managed the length of the general conversation in both tiers, however centres need to make a note of the timings of the general conversation, as any extraneous conversation after the time limit is discounted.

Teachers appeared confident and familiar in the conduct of the component, generally leading the examinations efficiently. However, now and again, careless mistakes were made, leading to some candidates being deprived of marks. Any such loss in marks were results of script alteration, omission of one or more bullet points or by inaccurate timings in the general conversation, creating an imbalance of time spent on each theme. Pitching the appropriate level of questions to candidates in the general conversation is key, gauging the right questions to encourage the best answers from the candidates. There is also a fine balance between spontaneity and allowing some very long pauses.

Sound quality appears to be a lesser concern this year- presumably due to technological improvements over the years. At times, however, the candidate is in the background as the microphone is pointing towards the teacher. Poor sound and/or crackling interference render the assessment difficult or uncertain. Sometimes this was the fault of the recording device, so a back-up option is recommended. Reported issues with background noise include loud talking in corridors or in the adjoining room, the TE continuously rustling papers directly in front of the microphone, long school bells, telephones and sometimes loud playground noise. Also, outside traffic and lawn mowers due to open windows, and even some noise from construction work. Ideally, the test should be conducted in a quiet area of the centre.

TASK 1: THE ROLE PLAY

The role play is marked for Communication only, unlike the Picture Based Task and the Conversation. Short, relevant answers were all that were necessary to access the full marks. A number of candidates gave long and developed responses which the teachers sometimes allowed or encouraged. This was often counterproductive as the extraneous material was ambiguous and/or incorrect and so the full 2 marks could not be awarded. Such practice is unnecessary, as there are no extra marks for long, developed conversations. Answers should be brief and to the point.

Some unknown vocabulary this year at Foundation level seemed to be 'alojamiento', 'salario', 'barrio' and 'empezar'. Common misunderstandings at Foundation level this year were with questions involving, '¿Con quién?' The unseen questions often proved a challenge, especially '¿cómo vas al instituto?' and '¿a qué hora empieza el recreo?' as candidates tend to struggle with the time. 'Cualidades personales' was often confused with 'datos personales', the opposite of last year. Asking a question about being a Teacher was too difficult as a number of students asked an incorrect question about teachers in general.

At Higher level, the most challenging bullet points are very often those inviting a past time frame, for example 'Qué hizo ayer?'. And those beginning with 'Háblame de la última vez que...' Such vocabulary as 'actividades de ocio', 'azafato/a' and 'lectura' were sometimes unknown and some found forming the questions tricky, especially with 'descuentos', 'revistas' and 'estudiar idiomas' as some candidate omitted one of the necessary elements.

Revision of question words is highly recommended as students often misunderstand the question words in the prompt. Besides, the formation of questions often proved difficult and, for example, some used the incorrect tense or person of a verb, or omitted the verbs all together. Candidates sometimes lost marks due to the use of an infinitive or even wrong verbs and/or tenses. The pronunciation of 'fue' instead of 'fui' creates ambiguity, and therefore, loses marks. Occasionally, candidates who ignored the question mark in front of the bullet point and made a statement rather than asking a question lost marks. Sometimes, candidates posed a completely different question- even native speakers in the higher tier!

Some marks were lost by the Teacher straying from the scripted questions, paraphrasing, or adding extra information. This also occurs with Teachers examining native speakers as they enter into a casual chit-chat. It is important to understand that any unscripted interjection from the Teacher Examiner that could give an advantage to the candidate immediately invalidates any response from the candidate. Equally, when the Teacher changes the used form of the verb to a very different tú form (and vice versa), the candidate's response is ignored. Similarly, the occasional omission of one of the bullet point questions clearly throws the candidates as well as losing them marks.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles agreed across all modern languages:

- Where a candidate has used the wrong register, this is ignored unless it impedes communication. However, if the teacher strays from the script and changes the register of the question, this gives the candidate an unfair advantage, and the candidate's response is deemed to be invalid.
- If a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question, there can be no credit for a response made by the candidate.

- Where a candidate has offered an incorrect response to a question, the teacher may not repeat the question. If s/he does so and the candidate then gives a correct response, this is ignored.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not re-phrase any of the questions.

TASK 2: THE PICTURE-BASED TASK

As with the Role Plays, teachers must keep to the script without changing or paraphrasing any of the questions and without adding any supplementary, unscripted questions. If they do, they will deprive their candidates of marks and any extraneous questions together with the responses are ignored. Unlike the Role Play, higher marks were awarded to extended answers, responses with at least three separate clauses which include a verb, offering clear different details, with the all-important justified opinions. A number of candidates often gave developed answers to the picture description, but thereafter gave much shorter, undeveloped responses to subsequent questions. It is therefore important to make use of the scripted follow-up questions - ¿Algo más? or ¿Por qué (no)? - to encourage candidates to extend their responses and aim for higher marks. However, the strand about hesitation and prompting is also something to consider in this.

At Foundation level, many candidates began the task with a detailed, yet simple description of the photo. Generally, candidates described the people and the clothes, sometimes with extra additional recognised nouns. The most common structures used were 'hay' and 'lleva', however the most common difficulties and mispronunciations were with 'es/está/es hay/ es lleva/llevar'. There were some attempts to describe the weather, but with incorrect language, especially with the weaker candidates: 'es sol'. Often the present continuous was either avoided or frequently incorrect, using 'ser' rather than 'estar'. On the whole, simple opinions with simple justifications were offered in bullet points two and five. The third bullet point required the use of the past tense or time frame and the fourth required the future. Sometimes a candidate would use an infinitive or no verb at all. At times, there would be a mixture of tenses in the same response, creating ambiguity and losing marks on both Communication and Content and for Language. There were occasions when a candidate extended their first statement so much, to include the coverage of all bullet points as a monologue, before teachers realised and then interjected, to then return to the order of questions. It's important to listen to the candidate responses and keep a track of where they are!

With specific Foundation cards this series, some unknown vocabulary included 'lugar turístico', and 'ayudar'. There were some mispronunciations of the words 'dibujo' and 'excursiones'. Some of the more complicated questions were 'comprar ropa- la ultima vez' and 'ser profesor/a- opinión' as they voiced opinions on their own teachers. On the whole, the photo cards about volunteering and environmental issues proved the most challenging.

Higher candidates were well rehearsed into uttering useful expressions such as 'hay', 'en la foto puedo ver', 'a la derecha', 'en el fondo' and 'veo' which helped them to develop and extend their responses. The more able were able to describe the action, some correctly using the present continuous. Some of the trickier elements seemed to be 'ir de paseo', 'lugar de interés' and 'tiempo' was confused with time. Hard questions were seemingly ¿Qué piensas de estar solo/a en casa?, ¿Cómo sería una excursión escolar ideal en el futuro? and ¿Qué opinas de ir al extranjero con el instituto? In HP2 gastaste was sometimes confused with ganaste by both TE and candidate. The most challenging were ¿Cómo cambiarán los centros comerciales en el futuro? and ¿Cómo serán los institutos en el futuro?

and there was a very similar question in HP4 in 2024. Perhaps the most challenging of cards were those on the environment and on shopping.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles agreed across all the modern languages:

- Candidates must make reference to the visual image in response to the first bullet point question.
- Where a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question which is not scripted, there can be no credit for a response made by the candidate.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not rephrase any of the questions.
- If the teacher misses out a question or the question is not answered, the examiner will drop one band in the assessment grid for Communication and Content only.

TASK 3: THE CONVERSATIONS

Candidates were required to participate in two conversations: the first on a topic selected and prepared by them, and the second on an unprepared topic selected by Pearson. An equal amount of time should have been allocated to each of the conversations and it is essential to keep strictly to the timings and avoid any imbalance between the two conversations. Teachers have a huge responsibility in this section of the exam, in eliciting the best performance from their candidates. Most teachers kept to the timings, put their candidates at their ease using a friendly tone of voice and spoke clearly and slowly so that the candidates had little or no problems in understanding the questions. However, in some cases the teachers allowed the first conversation to overrun thus restricting the time available for the second conversation. Since examiners stop listening when the full time is up, the shortness of the second conversation affected the final marks awarded. Some conversations lasted up to 10 minutes! There is no requirement for the candidates to ask the teacher a question in this specification.

For the first Conversation, candidates should be encouraged to introduce the topic they have chosen for up to one minute prior to the interaction with the teacher. It is equally important to ensure that they are not allowed to go on beyond the one-minute presentation and teachers should interrupt with their first question if the candidate seems determined to continue with a monologue. Teachers need to listen to what is said in the presentation and not ask questions that repeat the information.

The most popular choices of Topics for the first Conversation were Holidays, Friends and Family and there was a significant number of prepared conversations on the Environment or Social Problems which allowed Higher candidates to demonstrate their competence in specialised vocabulary. Many Foundation candidates chose the theme of global issues but the vocabulary and terminology seemed too difficult for many. A more familiar chosen theme is likely to prove more successful.

Unsurprisingly, the first prepared conversation was often more successful than the second, however the general conversation is marked globally. It was noticeable that some candidates frequently found it difficult to complete their sentences as they struggled to find the right vocabulary, grammatical structures or verb tenses. Some candidates were encouraged to use heavily rehearsed sentences and phrases in the presentation and sometimes into the first Conversation. At times candidates who had

been prepared in this manner appeared unsure of what they were saying and/or gave robotic responses which often appeared to show little understanding of the language. These candidates sometimes spoke in such a manner, almost 'reading' from their memory, that the intonation and pronunciation were heavily impacted and at times the candidate was difficult to understand at all. Some teachers asked closed questions or gave too much guidance. Any issues with pronunciation arose with such words as *cine*, *creo*, *piscina*, *emocionante*, *tuviera*, *pudiera* and there is some confusion with *gustarse*. The accuracy in tenses and time frames appeared to be a challenge and impacted on the mark for linguistic knowledge and accuracy. The most commonly used adjectives were *bueno*, *importante*, *divertido*, *aburrido* and *interesante*.

Variation in lexis and structures offer greater marks for language at Higher tier. Some Higher students used nice verb constructions like *mi amigo piensa que...*, *sin embargo antes pensaba que...* Also, expressions like *es la leche*, *una pérdida de tiempo*, opinions like *me chifla*, *ojalá* or uncommon adjectives like *guay*, *flipante*, *comprensivo*, *inolvidable*. Some impressive expressions were used such as *es pan comida*, *somos como uña y carne* and *es una lástima que...*

The second, unprepared conversation often gave a better guide to the candidates' fluency and ability. Some teachers are still relying on a list of prepared questions and did not consider rephrasing for those who struggled. In some extreme cases all the candidates had been directed to prepare the same topic for their Conversation 1, even to the extent of providing identical introductions for the first minute. Moreover, the teacher read out exactly the same questions to each of the candidates so that the examination became a question-and-answer session instead of a spontaneous conversation.

The Conversations should be allowed to develop naturally, and the teachers should listen carefully to what the candidate is saying and build the conversation accordingly. It is certainly worth preparing topic related questions in advance in case the conversation grinds to a halt, but it is not a good idea to rely exclusively on prepared questions as this destroys spontaneity and the natural flow of conversation. There is a fine balance between allowing the candidate to show spontaneity and extend answers and interjecting to discourage scripted answers and/or very long pauses. Some candidates clearly were unable to give an answer to some questions, yet the Teacher allowed some very long silences to occur. Stating '¿algo más?' is sometimes counterproductive as this really can affect hesitation. Conversely, some candidates would be narrating events well and the Teacher interrupted with a difficult question and threw the candidate, creating an uncomfortable silence. Some candidates were disadvantaged because the teacher failed to ask any questions that required the use of a tense other than the present. Using 'ayer', 'en el futuro', 'normalmente' would be helpful to enable students to recognise the tenses needed.

Again, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles that have been agreed across all modern languages:

- Foundation Conversations should last for between 4 and 4½ minutes and Higher 4 ½ and 6 minutes.
- Timings begin with the candidate's first utterance.
- Conversations that are too short are likely to be self-penalising.
- Conversations that are too long: once the maximum time has passed, examiners stop listening and assessing at the end of the candidate's response to the current question.
- An equal amount of time must be allocated to each Conversation.

- Where the first Conversation is a monologue and has no interaction, candidates will be limited to a maximum score of 6 marks for Interaction and Spontaneity. The marks for Communication and Content and Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy, however, are unaffected.