



General Certificate of Education

Spanish 1696 *Specification*

SPA2T Speaking

Report on the Examination *2009 examination - January series*

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General Comments

This new AS Speaking test has produced very positive results in its first series. The entry was small, but the tests were conducted competently and according to the guidelines. Care was taken to cover the prescribed topics and adhere to the appropriate timings. Candidates seemed comfortable with the revised range of topics and were well-prepared. The level of performance overall was very good and in some cases excellent.

No-one had opted to record their tests digitally, using the DTT. Unfortunately, there were some recordings on old equipment and poor quality cassettes that were difficult to listen to, especially when the candidate was too far from the microphone and there was interference from background noise in and around the centre.

Part 1: Discussion of stimulus card

The discussion of the stimulus card is a familiar task, but it is important to refer to the mark scheme and note how the marks are awarded in this Specification because this impacts on the way candidates need to be prepared for this section. 5 marks are available for the coverage of the 5 printed questions. These should take up roughly/no more than half of the 5 minutes allocated for Part 1, with no additional supplementary questions inserted at this stage. A further 5 marks are available for a discussion in which the examiner seeks to develop the sub-topic along the lines suggested by the stimulus itself and by the candidate's answers to the printed questions. To do this effectively, the examiner will need to have studied the stimulus cards prior to the test and prepared questions that will give the candidate opportunities to develop views and opinions.

Some candidates did not gain marks in this series because the answers they gave to the printed questions were too brief. The highest marks are awarded for points made **and developed**. Candidates should be made aware that, in their 20 minute preparation period, they are required to prepare answers that offer something in the way of elaboration, exemplification or justification of the points made.

It is important to note that the discussion of the stimulus card in Part 1 should remain within the context of the **sub-topic** indicated on the card and not the whole topic. If the stated sub-topic is, for example, Music, there should be no drifting into the sub-topics of Cinema and Fashion/Trends within the Popular Culture topic.

The most popular cards in this series were B and E. Tarjeta B (Health and well-being) was well-tackled by both male and female candidates who were clearly familiar with the problem of eating disorders and could express meaningful views on the subject. Tarjeta E (Television) proved accessible to all and candidates responded with interest and confidence. The least popular card was Tarjeta A which may suggest that Fashion/Trends has yet to become a familiar sub-topic.

Part 2: Conversation

The majority of teacher-examiners observed the correct timings in the Conversation, ensuring that the remaining 3 topics were given roughly the same proportion of the 10 minutes available, i.e. approximately three minutes. Candidates were thoroughly prepared for their first (nominated) topic and there were some excellent performances. There was, however, a slight tendency to allow the candidate to deliver lengthy monologues. Although

the mark scheme rewards candidates who “take the lead”, it is not expected that the candidate will take over, leaving the examiner free to simply listen. The nominated topic must be treated as an integral part of the conversation and not as a presentation. The most popular nominated topics were Fashion and Cinema.

It is important to note that, unlike the discussion of the stimulus card in Part 1, the discussion of the three topics in the conversation may cover any or all three of the sub-topics.

Teachers are advised to encourage their candidates to choose topics that enable them to demonstrate independence. It is not good practice to allow all candidates from a centre to answer the same questions on the same chosen topic. Questions and topics should be varied and candidates made aware that markers will be listening carefully for evidence of spontaneity. There is no requirement to relate the topic to a Hispanic society, so candidates are free to use examples from their own sphere of experience to illustrate their points.

In some tests the quality of discussion of the remaining 2 topics was noticeably less detailed. It is essential that the examiner provide opportunities for the candidate to respond spontaneously in order to attract a high mark for Interaction. Although some “suggested” questions are supplied, these should be seen simply as starter questions after which the examiner will develop the discussion asking questions based on the candidate’s response. An examiner who asks questions from a set list without reference to what the candidate is saying will prejudice that candidate’s success.

Pronunciation and Intonation

To achieve full marks (5) for Pronunciation and Intonation, the candidate’s performance has only to be classified as “good”. However, a careless approach to this aspect meant that few achieved full marks. Incorrect stress quite often resulted in a performance that only merited the description “intelligible”.

Knowledge of Grammar

In this small sample, there were encouragingly few performances in which grammar caused “difficulties for immediate comprehension”. Many candidates were able to use a variety of linguistic structures effectively. It was noticeable that there was some pre-learning of quite sophisticated phrases, using imperfect subjunctives and idiomatic expressions. The effect was mitigated, however, by being interspersed with some quite serious errors in very basic grammar. Candidates are advised that a confident grasp of regular and irregular verbs, a wide range of appropriate vocabulary, and the ability to construct coherent sentences will equip them to express ideas and opinions more effectively than the occasional linguistic flourish.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

With effect from Summer 2009, the following ruling will apply to the marks which can be awarded for Interaction in the Part 2 Conversation.

The *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations* state that approximately 3 minutes must be allocated to each of the three topics to be covered in Part 2. Therefore, a candidate who spends less than 2 minutes on any topic in Part 2 will have their mark for Interaction reduced by one band, eg a candidate who is judged at 8 marks would have the mark reduced to 6. A candidate judged at 9 marks would have their mark reduced to 7. This same ruling will apply to candidates who do not meet the requirement of the specification for the test to cover all four AS topics. This may occur if the teacher-examiner covers a topic in Part 2 which has already been covered in Part 1.

All teacher-examiners should be made aware of this information in advance of conducting the tests.

Centres are reminded that language-specific Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2009 covering both Unit 2 and Unit 4. These meetings will be full day meetings and free of charge. Further details can be obtained from the AQA website in due course.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website