

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback Summer 2010

GCE

GCE Spanish (6SP01) Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Spanish

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Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Spanish (6SP01)

Examiner's Report for Centres

The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections - A and B and lasts between 8-10 minutes.

In section A candidates are required to respond to four Edexcel-set questions on a stimulus related to a student's chosen general topic area. The first two questions will relate directly to the content of the stimulus card and the second two questions will invite the candidate to give opinions or react to the topic of the stimulus.

In section B the teacher/examiner should engage the candidate in a discussion that, although relates to the same general topic area and its linked sub-topics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 50 using the grid printed in the specification (1.4, p. 24 and p. 25). Quality of language (Accuracy) 8 marks, Quality of language (Range) 8 marks, Response 20 marks, Understanding (stimulus specific) 4 marks, Understanding (General topic area) 10 marks.

Test that are too short

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Quality of Language - Accuracy'
- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis'
- 'Response'

e.g.

4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

If a candidate would have scored 7, they are given 5, if they would have scored 6, they are given 4. The penalty is not be applied to 'Understanding - Stimulus specific' or 'Understanding - General Topic Area'

Test that are too long

Once the 10 minute mark has passed, the examiner stopped listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not move away from initial input

Candidates were limited in the amount of marks they could score.

- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis' - cannot score more than 3
- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8
- 'Understanding - General topic area' - cannot score more than 0

The application of marking for Unit 1, is the same for all GCE 2008 languages.

Teacher-Examiners

All assistant associates reported that this unit, now its fourth series, was generally well examined. There were some good examples of excellent teacher examining. In general teacher examiners have clearly read and interpreted requirements outlined in the oral training guide. Centres generally followed the advice given in previous reports. The majority of candidates responded well to the demands of the examination and had a good understanding of the requirements. Most performed very well and some discussions were excellent. The best candidates had clearly carried out research and referred to this in their discussions. They spoke with confidence and understanding about their chosen topic area. Discussions relating to "The World Around Us" were particularly successful. In general candidates appear to have been better prepared for the demands of the examination this series.

All candidates had clearly prepared their stimulus well. They generally anticipated the four Edexcel set questions well and demonstrated a clear understanding of the content of the oral stimulus in their answers to the first two questions in Section A.

The very best candidates were able to manipulate language from the stimulus and expand, explain and develop the content, without including irrelevant pre-learnt personal information. A very good example noted by one examiner can be illustrated from the GTA the World around Us, Stimulus card 2A "El reciclaje de las bolsas de plástico".

TE: 1. Explica el problema mencionado en el primer párrafo.

Candidate: "Con los millones de bolsas de la compra que los supermercados dan a los clientes están haciendo mucho daño al medio ambiente porque no son degradables y no es fácil deshacerse de ellas"

TE: 2. Según el artículo, ¿Qué deben hacer los españoles con las bolsas?

Candidate: "En España se ha iniciado una campaña para educar a los ciudadanos a aprovechar más las bolsas de plástico. Las deben usar muchas veces y cuando no sirven para nada, las deben poner en un contenedor de color amarillo. Quieren evitar que la gente las tire al suelo como podemos ver en la fotografía del estímulo."

However in a minority of centres, it is still not clear that all candidates have been made fully aware that manipulation of the language is a requirement and that answers given must refer to all the different concepts and ideas contained in the stimulus. This has been reported in previous feedback and guidance given to centres but clearly, needs to remain a focus in this and subsequent reports to centres. Occasionally candidates restricted their responses to questions asked to just the first idea noted in each paragraph. Likewise some (near) native speakers continued to limit the responses given by partially lifting words and phrases to the exact content of the stimulus without expanding their answers sufficiently. This resulted in a satisfactory response only and as a consequence, a maximum outcome of only 2 out of the 4 marks available.

The best candidates prepared good ideas for questions 3 and 4 during their 15 minutes preparation time and answered all four Edexcel-set questions with a fair degree of detail. Most candidates dealt well with the unpredictable elements and in particular in question 4. Section A was felt to be a good discriminator. There was generally a good spread of marks noted of the 4 /50 marks available.

The most popular GTA this series was Youth Culture. This was much more closely followed by Lifestyle, Health and Fitness than in previous series where both seemed to be the most popular choices of centres/candidates. The World Around us was more widely selected by mature students and those from international centres. Only a very small number of candidates chose Education and Employment.

In general teacher examiners adhered to the set questions asked. However a small minority continue to change these and also to add additional questions. Such practise penalises candidates' performances and their responses have to be ignored by examiners.

The majority of teacher examiners allowed plenty of time for Section B. In some centres however, the few candidates with very slow delivery spent too much time on Section A. As a consequence this gave too little opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a good understanding of the GTA and to gain the higher marks for this criterion.

In Section B some excellent examining was heard from most centres. Teacher/examiners listened very carefully to the responses of the candidate, asking open rather than closed questions leading the conversation naturally through to other aspects of the GTA areas rather than rigidly using a set of pre-prepared questions, the same for each candidate.

An excellent example heard this series from one teacher examiner for a candidate who chose Lifestyle, Health and Fitness and was given stimulus card 1A is as follows:-

*Question 3: En tu opinión, ¿por qué es tan popular el futbol en el mundo?
El futbol es muy sencillo y hay muchos hinchas porque no es un deporte caro solo necesitas una pelota"*

Then after question 4 the teacher tailors his/her question to the candidate's earlier response:

"Tú crees que hay algunos deportes que son más elitistas que otros?"

Fortunately, more rarely than previously reported, in a very small minority of centres the use of the same questions for all candidates or a pool of pre set questions was clearly not suitable. This resulted in an artificial question and answer session in which little attention was paid to the given response and as a consequence, no development of a natural conversation. This was evident too in the small minority of cases where some candidates appeared to have over rehearsed their responses to questions in section B. Such practice is not in the spirit of the examination and contravenes the instructions centres have been given both in the specification, the oral training guide, the exemplar materials and the ICE document.

It was pleasing to note that in most cases candidates' responses were spontaneous and not pre rehearsed or recited. Overall, although with varying degrees of success in line with candidate performance, there was a broader range of ability success in this series compared with January 2010. This is reflected in the range of responses in both Section A and Section B of the oral test.

Whilst the majority of teacher-examiners conducted the exams professionally, the following development points are worth considering:

- Teacher-examiners might like to consider using a broader range of questions especially where there is overlap between GTAs. For the two most popular GTAs - Lifestyle and Youth Culture - the exact same questions on smoking and drinking were used in a minority of centres. Not only did this penalise the better candidates - as questions more suitable to their ability and exploratory questioning techniques were not used - but also meant there was little evidence of a true/natural discussion
- A minority of centres used a set list of questions. This prevents better candidates from reaching the higher marks for response as little room for development of responses can result from this.

- There was evidence that some candidates had pre-learnt responses for Section B. Likewise some candidates responded with what they assumed was the examiner's question and did not tailor their response to the exact question. This was apparent when there was a significant difference between the language used in the two sections of the examination
- For understanding of the GTA, examiners are looking for a certain depth of discussion and development of opinions. If the teacher-examiner introduces too many sub topics into Section B then the discussion can become too superficial and prevent the candidate from reaching the top boxes. Teacher-Examiners are reminded that a minimum of one, but ideally two sub topics should be discussed in Section B.
- Some questions heard in Section B were little beyond GCSE level - "¿te gusta hacer deporte", "describe tu colegio ideal", "¿qué te gustaría estudiar?, ¿dónde vives?, ¿en qué trabajan tus padres? Such questions preclude candidates from reaching the top boxes in which examiners seek to award at AS Level.
- It is best to avoid being too helpful to the candidates. Teacher examiners must not rephrase questions unnecessarily or complete candidates' sentences for them, neither should they provide them with key words and ideas.
- Whilst it is recommended that teacher/examiners keep their input to a minimum it is a requirement of the oral test that section B is a discussion - a natural conversation which flows through (preferably two of) the sub topics of the candidates' chosen topic area. Extended monologues, regurgitated material, flat intonation, over prepared material are all clear indicators of a test which has been pre-learnt/over prepared and which will receive a low mark for "Response".
- Centres should check the date of the examination material they are to use. Only the stimuli materials for the given series should be used to assess candidates.

Suitability of stimulus cards chosen by candidates

All stimulus cards proved accessible to candidates and most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of their content. As anticipated the two most popular topics were Youth Culture and Concerns and Lifestyle, Health and Fitness in this order. Where other topic areas were chosen there was a generally similar outcome such that all stimuli and follow on testing seemed equally valid.

Success in this section is dependent on the candidate's understanding of the stimulus and his/her ability to manipulate the language rather than lift the words from the text and express the ideas in his/her own words. For example the very best candidates gave 3-4 explanations per question, inferred and gave relevant examples.

Candidates had clearly been well prepared for this part of the test and had recognised that questions 1 and 2 related to the content of the text. In all cases the better candidates were able to manipulate the language of the texts and further develop their responses with detailed examples and explanations. The weaker candidates used partial or complete lifts and produced satisfactory responses to questions 1 and 2 (achieving a maximum of 2 marks overall for this criterion). In question 1 the consistent use of "según el primer párrafo" helped candidates focus on the first paragraph from which to draw their responses.

Question 3 was accessible in all four stimuli and allowed for a good range of responses. This was the most predictable of all four set-questions, directly asking the candidates for their own opinions on the stimulus sub-topic, and allowed the candidates to demonstrate their ideas, opinions and research into their chosen GTA.

Question 4 was again a good discriminator and provided a good opportunity to distinguish the better candidates.

Examiners' specific comments related to each of the stimuli

Youth Culture and Concerns - stimulus 1A/B - La barrera generacional

- Despite understanding the idea of the text, that technology separated young people from their parents, many candidates lifted rather than attempted to manipulate the language
- Some good examples of language manipulation were noted:
 - la brecha, laguna, un gran vacío, for "barrera";
 - maneras distintas for "diferentes formas";
 - los padres son mayores/más viejos for "la diferencia de edad".
 - To manipulate "ver o valorar las cosas" some good vocabulary manipulation was heard; "conciben/interpretan, entienden las ideas/principios/pensamientos. One very good example was noted: " tienen conceptos muy distintos sobre la vida y como se debe actuar".
 - Universo for "mundo"
 - Razón or motivo for "causa"
 - Avances tecnológicos/nuevos productos tecnológicos for "las nuevas tecnologías"
 - Distanciando/desuniendo/dividiendo for "separando".

Youth Culture and Concerns - stimulus 2A/B - La ropa de diseño

The first question about why young people wear designer clothes was dealt with better than the second about what parents should do. However some candidates did still lift language from the text. In 2B candidates continued to talk about designer clothes when asked in question 3 a more general question about whether young people spend their money well or in question 4 when asked about young people's concerns or priorities. In 2A/B a fair number of candidates misunderstood "prioridades" and "preocupaciones".

Some good synonyms used were:

- modelos de marca, de diseñadores famosos, marcas conocidas, ropa de última moda,
- pertenecer al grupo, ser parte de la pandilla, encajar en el grupo de amigos, ser uno más.
- Confianza en si mismos, seguridad, creer en ellos mismos, tener confianza, no tener complejos (when referring to "autoestima"), creer en si mismos
- Aspecto, la imagen for "aparición"

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness - stimulus 1A/B - el salario altísimo de los futbolistas causa crisis

Many candidates showed they had understood the stimulus but some had difficulty explaining it. Many had difficulty with the number in the first paragraph and some found it difficult to rephrase "económicamente enfermo". Only the best candidates included the idea of money from advertising. In question 2 which referred to paragraph two some candidates incorrectly conveyed the idea that footballers should earn 40% or were unable to rephrase the words in the text. Some good examples noted were:

- "los que más ganan los sueldos más altos/reciben millones de euros (mas de ocho y medio)

- Ganancias por hacer anuncios publicitarios/ganan el doble con los anuncios
- Problemas financieros/económicos/una situación grave desde el punto de vista económico
- Reducir, disminuir/recortar for “bajar”

Question 3 which asked either why football was so popular or why there were so many fans produced some very good answers. Question 4 asking why sport should be practised allowed the candidates plenty of scope to demonstrate their research into this topic area and proved a good transitional question to section B.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness - stimulus 2A/B - El alcohol en los Estados Unidos

Many candidates demonstrated a good overall understanding of this stimulus card but there was more lifting of the language of this card than others. The two ideas of 21 years old and 14 years old were not always clearly distinguished and the meaning of “el norteamericano medio” proved difficult for some weaker candidates. Some excellent manipulation by the very best candidates of the idea of being older than 21 were noted: “necesitan tener mas de 21 anos”, “tener al menos 21 anos”, como minimo 21 anos”. Question 2 was also a good discriminator as some candidates made simple language manipulations such as “cometen delitos” and “tienen problemas en la escuela” whereas the better candidates attempted to change the expressions further such as:

- Pueden meterse en líos con las autoridades, actos criminales, ir contra la ley, delinquir, luchas, agresiones, actos estúpidos y violentos cuando están borrachos.
- Es más probable que acaben peleándose
- Tienen la costumbre de beber con frecuencia for “de forma habitual”
- Dificultades en el colegio, en sus estudios escolares for “problemas en la escuela”

Some candidates did not understand “disuadir” or could not think of ideas to stop young people from drinking. In question 4 (2B) many candidates mistook “otros riesgos” to mean risks of drinking rather than other health issues such as drug addiction and yet were awarded for valid responses.

The World Around Us - stimulus 1A/B - Los turistas en Andalucía

This card was found to be very well understand by most candidates who gave some good answers although some made no attempt to change the language especially in question 1 where they had to express “ir a la playa”, “las compras”, “la naturaleza” and “tomar el sol” in their own words. Some good examples were:

- El campo, el paisaje, la geografía
- Ir a las tiendas
- Ver las ruinas históricas, el castillo, la catedral,
- Cocina, comida for “gastronomía”
- Comida americana en vez de la comida mediterránea for “comida rápida”
- Desperdicios for “basura”
- Conducta for “comportamiento”

The World Around Us - stimulus 1A/B -El reciclaje de las bolsas de plástico

Very few candidates sat this test and yet those who did had clearly chosen the topic area for good reasons demonstrating excellent personal research into the issues and most scored well. Once again the large number in the first paragraph proved problematic for many candidates although some well prepared candidates were able to paraphrase

“millones de bolsas”. One candidate talked about “botellas de plástico” throughout in spite of the title.

Education and Employment

All examiners noted very few candidates for this General Topic Area. Those candidates who were well prepared provided some very competent responses and most had no difficulty with the main ideas of the texts. Words which proved challenging to a minority were “campana de sensibilización”, “apoyo” and “tener éxito”.

Centre performance including administration (e.g. submission of oral forms, quality of recording, timings etc).

Although the majority of centres recorded their orals on cassettes there is an ever-increasing number of centres submitting their recordings on audio and data CDs. Digital submission on CDs is a welcome addition as it makes assessment of oral exams easier and the quality of recording is often much better. Given the difficulty sourcing cassettes centres are advised to start adopting the use of digital recording.

If centres are recording onto CD in an audio or data format, it would be helpful to examiners if centres indicated which format they were using on the CD. On the whole centres labelled their cassettes and CD cases well. However where centres did not number their candidates it has proved difficult to check the correct sequencing of the stimulus cards. Most centres included correct OR1 forms with their tapes. Timings of examinations were usually correct although examiners have recorded some tests lasting 4 minutes and 30 seconds and most examiners reported examples of short tests lasting just over 7 minutes 30 seconds - the threshold for the application of penalties. The sound quality of recordings was good with very few inaudible recordings this series.

Please note that the oral recordings for unit 1 and unit 3 should be submitted on different cassettes/CDs. There were some incidences where centres submitted all recordings on the same tape/CD.

Centres will also need to be reminded of the following:

- Careful reading of the Teacher-examiner handbook is advised before conducting the orals and the new additional stimulus cards in the summer series needs to be planned
- The newest version of the OR1 form should be downloaded from the Edexcel website.
- Cassette tapes need to be checked before the start of the oral test. In a minority of cases teacher-examiners did not leave enough room on the tape and had to turn the cassette over during the middle of a test to continue recording. This is unsettling for candidates.
- It is helpful to record the name, candidate number, the chosen topic area and the stimulus card (e.g 1A) at the start of each oral test.
- Teacher-examiners should check the recordings of their candidates/recording equipment at the start and end of each test. In some instances blank tapes/CDs were submitted, and these candidates were not assessed.
- The distribution of the stimulus cards is the responsibility of the centres not the Visiting examiner. Please ensure whomever is responsible in the centre for meeting the visiting examiner is aware of this.
- The chaperone has to sit in the room with the visiting examiner and that their presence should not in any way distract the examiner or the candidate.

- The room used to conduct the oral should be of sufficient size to enable 3 people to fit and freely move around, as well as the necessary recording equipment.
- Cassettes/CDs should be well packaged when they are sent to examiners as some are arriving damaged although this has not affected examiners' ability to mark this series
- Teacher/examiners are reminded to ask the entire question in section A as some missed the "¿por qué?" and candidates failed to justify their answers.
- Teacher/examiners must also repeat questions in section A or B if asked to do so. If this is done frequently, however, the candidate's mark for Understanding and Response may be affected

Quality of language - Accuracy

Candidates are still making many basic errors. The use of the infinitive instead of a conjugated verb does impede communication e.g "los varones destroy mucha disrupcion en la escuela". Another common error was the wrong ver ending e.g "veo muchos jovenes es bebo en la calle por la noche".

Agreements of subject/verb and noun/adjective and gender errors of common words was typical e.g "el television, la padre, la dinero, una problema, uno crisis" also the common phrase "es necesita" occurred frequently.

"Gustar" is still particularly difficult for many especially in the third person e.g "mi padre gusta España" as was the correct uses of ser/estar/haber, e.g "soy a favor/en contra de fumar", "es bien que", "soy once años de edad" "muchos jóvenes beben porque no mucho hacer".

"La media" was frequently used for "los medios de comunicación" and not only by the candidates

Overall

It was pleasing to hear a variety of recordings and that centres were now more confident conducting the oral exams.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw mark boundary	50	40	35	30	26	22	18	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	60	48	42	36	30	24	18	0

The same boundary applies for both components 1A and 1B

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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