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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Spanish (6SP03) Paper 1A

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The assessment for this unit is divided into two sections and lasts between 11 and 13 minutes.

The first section is a debate and requires students to present and to take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. The examiner then plays devil's advocate, adopts the opposite view to the student and provides strong and meaningful challenges to allow students to defend their views and to use the language of debate and argument.

At the end of this section, the examiner indicates that the examination is moving to the second part of the test and moves away smoothly from the debate in part one to the discussion in part two by asking a link question that leads from the initial issue into an area associated with the initial issue. It is also acceptable to move to the second part of the test by moving to a completely different topic and making an appropriate remark to that effect *Ahora vamos a hablar de algo completamente diferente.*

In this second part of the examination students are required to demonstrate their ability to engage in a natural, unpredictable (but not unfamiliar) and meaningful discussion of two or three follow up issues. During this section the examiner should encourage the student to express their views on the issues raised.

The aim of this unit is set out in Section A, page 6, of the Specifications. Students are expected to interact effectively with the teacher/examiner, defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher/examiner moves the conversation away from the chosen issue. Centres are reminded that the test is an examination of the student's ability to use language spontaneously in largely unpredictable circumstances.

Assessment Principles

The test is assessed positively out of 50.

Response - 20 marks

There are three descriptors in this box.

- **Spontaneity**

Is the discourse spontaneous or pre-learnt, over rehearsed and to what extent?

Discourse is the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the teacher and the examiner developing the line of argument and exploring it in more depth. In practice, this means that each participant addresses the points made by the other responding appropriately to each other's input, whether that be a question, a comment or a remark.

Students will score well here if the test is a genuine discourse and not a sequence of questions and answers.

- **Abstract concepts**

Ideas beyond the norm: moral, ethical, political, values and opinions. Can the student handle abstract concepts, not purely concrete exchanges? Is the discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive?

- **Range of lexis and structures**

Does the student have a good range of lexis and sentence structures appropriate to the issues discussed? Is the language authentically used?

Quality of Language - 7 marks

This box assesses accuracy of language, pronunciation and intonation.

Reading and research - 7 marks

This box assesses the student's level of awareness and understanding of both general issues and the chosen issue for debate.

Students need to undertake research into their chosen issue and read widely around other topics in order to be able to demonstrate awareness and to be able to formulate their opinion and justify their arguments.

Comprehension and development - 16 marks

There are two descriptors in this box:

- **The ability to understand the spoken language**

Can students understand all the implications of the questions put to them? Is there evidence of challenging questions required to demonstrate that students have engaged in a discussion and debate at an appropriate intellectual level for A2?

- **The ability to develop the responses**

Can students respond demonstrating understanding, take the initiative and move the discussion forward? Can students independently sustain the development of ideas? Can students develop the discussion by offering longer contributions that lead to further paths for development.

Development is appropriately expanding on an idea and point of view. This can be in the form of justification, illustration, exemplification, clarification, comparison of the student's ideas and views.

Students' Performance

Most centres are now very familiar with what is required of this unit and their students were well prepared. There was a range in quality in the performances heard. However, there were many fine and very competent performances noted.

It is very important for centres to remember that successful outcome for students in this test is closely related to and often dependent upon the way the teacher /examiner conducts the examination. The following observations from tests submitted this summer illustrate this point.

Some examiners allowed their students to recite long monologues learnt by heart without interruption and at times it appeared that they had colluded with students. Such practice merely indicates a lack of spontaneity and an over reliance on pre-learning. In such instances student's marks will have been affected as per the Assessment Criteria and the Marking Guidance sheet.

Students should be told that they will be expected to discuss any of the issues they have worked on in the class, at home or are currently in the news. The precise issues to be discussed in their exam, and how they are going to be treated, constitute the unpredictable nature of the test and thereby ensuring that students' responses are spontaneous.

Students will not score highly if centres use the same set of topics and questions for all students.

Some centres are still failing to challenge the students during the first part of 6SP03. Examiners conducted the initial issue as a knowledge test rather than as a proper debate. Some did a mixture of probing and factual information questions, with more emphasis on the latter. If the examiner did not challenge the student's stance the appropriate marking principles were applied, as per the Marking Guidance sheet.

A few centres did not observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination. Some presentations were unduly long. Some debates were short (around 4 min) and some lasted as long as 7 min. Some examiners wasted time with long-winded explanations and unduly wordy questioning, some even taking up to 1 minute.

The majority of students did answer the question asked but there were still some who decided to reinterpret the question into one that they would have liked to be put to them and followed their own agenda.

In spite of the above it was pleasing to note that many students approached the test with confidence and responded readily and fluently to most questions asked and they were able to develop their replies without too much reliance on, or prompting from, the examiner.

The Debate

The best students had researched their chosen issue, had anticipated counter arguments and had sufficient evidence and knowledge to support

their arguments. They also had good command of lexis relevant to their area of debate. Weaker performing students simply relied on assertion, generalisations or personal conviction to pull through and consequently all too often ran out of ideas and tended to repeat their arguments.

The following are four suitable issues for the debate noted by our examiners:

- *Yo creo que se puede justificar el terrorismo.* The student and examiner had a very interesting debate. The student had good knowledge about terrorism in the past and present and gave somewhat controversial reasons for why terrorists commit acts of terrorism and why they feel it is justifiable. It included knowledge about ETA and IRA.
- *A favor del aborto en El Salvador.* This debate was different from the many abortion debates that we hear because the student knew a lot about culture and law in El Salvador showing good research as well as excellent use of abstract concepts.
- *Estoy en contra de la brutalidad.* Although this may seem like a topic which would only allow for minimal debate, the student clarified that he meant the exposure to violence/brutality in videogames and films. The examiner raised to the challenge and provided strong and meaningful counter arguments.
- *En contra de la gestación subrogada.* This was a good example of genuine debate, well researched and very engaging to listen to. The debate covered the moral aspect and the resulting Law 14, article 10 of 2006 making it illegal in Spain and the implications of having to pay €150,000.

The Discussion

In this part of the examination the better performing students were well informed and aware of current issues, could express their opinions clearly, analyse and justify their points of view with examples or evidence and develop their responses. Some excellent examining was heard from many centres where examiners asked probing questions in no more than two or three follow up areas which allowed their students to produce the necessary detail and depth in their responses. All areas introduced for development followed a natural course in ensuing discussion.

Occasionally some examiners had clearly prepared their challenging questions and followed their planned line of questioning not responding to or picking up in any way what the students said. There was no sense of interaction between the examiner and student and, even though questions were often challenging, the discussion followed a question and answer format.

Sometimes many unconnected topics were covered and the examinations were more interviews than discussions which resulted in a series of long

monologues - some students spoke uninterrupted for over 2 minutes. This is not what is expected or required.

Very occasionally the examiner interrupted the students unnecessarily, talked over them or spoke as much as them not leaving the student much room to say anything meaningful and as a consequence disadvantaged him/her when it came to judging his/her performance.

Some examiners adopted a clear debating attitude in the second part of the exam, instead of just conducting a discussion.

Examiners must also be aware that questions concerning the student's future plans can only be relevant if they lead on to a more in-depth examination of topics like unemployment fears or the value of tourism/ effect of tourism on the environment.

The follow up areas for this part of the examination can be chosen from the Additional General Topic Areas for A2 as well as from the General Topic Area for AS. However, for a student to access the higher marks, AS topics visited at A2 should be considered in greater depth and answers given to questions should clearly indicate progression from AS to A2. Occasionally teacher examiners conducted the first part of the exam (the debate) correctly but for the second part (the discussion) they asked AS type questions carrying out a re-run of the Unit 1 speaking test and thereby not giving the students any chance to develop their response appropriately.

Illustrated below and noted by our examiners are:

Two good examples for the oral tests:

Chosen Issue:

'A favor de la ingeniera genética' The debate included the 1988 law prohibiting the use of human embryos, cells, tissues for cloning and the importance of the discovery and use of DNA

Follow up areas:

- Genetically modified foods to tackle famine in Third world countries.
- The future of Obama Care in the USA after Donald Trump.

Chosen Issue:

'A favor de abolir la caza en España porque es una tradición arcaica'. The research was thorough: 1 million licences issued, 90% of catalan territory is considered 'un coto de caza', 57 millones de euros contribution to the economy, 48 human deaths a year due to accidents, 5000 toneladas de 'casquillos' left in the forests every year.

Follow up areas:

- Catalonia losing the battle against the Spanish Government about abolishing bullfighting.
- Animal experimentation and veganism.

An example of a discussion that illustrates challenging questions that a teacher/examiner asked about the Donald Trump's presidency.

¿Qué opinión tienes de Donald Trump?

¿Tú crees que la elección de Trump está relacionada con los movimientos de ultraderecha en Europa?

¿Crees que Rusia logró cambiar el resultado de las elecciones en EEUU?

¿Por qué crees que Donald Trump emplea tanto las redes sociales como twitter?

An example showing some of facts and opinions that a student used during a discussion about allowing 16 year olds to vote. This student demonstrated wide reading and awareness of this topic.

- Escocia permitió que los jóvenes de 16 años voten en el Referéndum para la independencia de Escocia en el 2014.

- No estoy de acuerdo con esto porque los menores de 16 años carecen de madurez para tomar estas decisiones. A esa edad un joven cree que ya lo sabe todo en la vida. Luego con la experiencia se da cuenta de que no es así.

- A los 16 años son más propensos a creer en los partidos políticos que proponen soluciones sencillas a problemas complejos.

- La instrucción que recibe en el colegio refleja las opiniones del profesor. No está equilibrada. Hay que tener experiencia de la universidad, el mundo laboral y las relaciones afectivas para alcanzar la objetividad.

Some examples of exams where students gave vague or nonsensical information. It is important that when students give facts and figures to support their points of view, they make sure they are clearly explained, realistic and relevant.

- Examiner - Pero el servicio nacional de salud fue creado para todos los ciudadanos.

- Student- Sí, es un sistema inclusivo, pero en mi opinión necesita más restricciones en el tratamiento porque una persona famosa tuvo una adicción al alcohol y tuvo un trasplante de hígado que costó al servicio nacional de salud 70 millones libras cada vez.

- Student - 50 de las personas obesas sufren de la depresión.

- Student - Un hombre tetrapléjico, que se llama Ramón Sampedro está actualmente luchando por el derecho a la eutanasia.

An example of an excellent centre in Gran Canaria where all the students were native or bilingual speakers. The examiner covered two or three topics

in depth. All the students were thoroughly prepared, not complacent. Highly articulate, analytical and persuasive in their arguments.

Native or near-native speakers

It was noted by our examiners that there were many native or near native speakers taking this examination. However, not all of them scored high marks. This was often because they had done little or no preparation at all for the examination relying solely on the quality of their spoken language to pull them through.

Many students are from South America and although there are indeed some differences, for example in vocabulary or accent, depending on the country from which they originate, examiners are aware of these and give due consideration to all Hispanic alternatives as entirely appropriate.

Suitability of Topics/Issues

The range of issues chosen for the debate was fairly wide. The most successful ones tended to be those that had a moral and/or ethical dimension and which had several possibilities for development. Some issues chosen for the debate were opinions rather than debatable points and as such could not create a meaningful argument.

The most popular issues were: abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration/ the refugee crisis, the legalisation of drugs, nuclear energy, terrorism, UK out of the European Union.

Some other interesting issues presented this year were :

*'En contra de las gallinas en jaulas' 'A favor del impuesto sobre la carne'
'En contra de los deberes en la escuela primaria' 'En contra de tener salarios iguales para hombres y mujeres en el deporte' 'A favor de usar la ingeniería genética en los seres humanos' 'En contra de los vientres de alquiler/ en contra de la gestación subrogada' 'A favor del uso de embriones para estudiar células madres'
'En contra de las vacas lecheras' 'A favor del veganismo' 'A favor de prohibir el uso de armas en USA' 'Estoy en contra de la fracturación hidráulica' 'En contra de la independencia de Cataluña' 'En contra de los inmensos sueldos que ganan los futbolistas' 'A favor del uso de drones para combatir el terrorismo' 'A favor de priorizar la tecnología como solución principal al calentamiento global' 'En contra de los zoológicos' 'En contra de la monarquía' 'A favor de legalizar la prostitución'
'En contra de las ideas de Donald Trump' 'En contra del impacto de la ganadería en el medio ambiente' 'A favor del "Burquini" 'A favor de la publicidad subliminal' 'En contra de la fuga de cerebros'*

Unsuitable issues were those that were not arguable from both sides or ones where the student was simply expressing personal opinion, such as: *'Cómo nos afecta la tecnología' 'En contra de la crueldad a los animales' 'A favor de los colegios privados'*

Quality of Language

Common errors:

Confusion of *ser*, *estar* and *haber*/ *saber*, *conocer*/ *por*, *para*.
Wrong verb endings, *infinitives* and *gerunds*.
No verb at all '*no necesario*' '*no posible*'
Gender of nouns, agreement of adjectives,
Gender issues with *la problema*, *la sistema*, *los leyes*, *el deuda*
Erratic subject/verb agreement
Confusion between nouns and adjectives

muy/*mucho*, *mayor*/*mejor* and *menor*
words such as *igualdad*, *mayoridad*, *controversial*, *suportivo*, *serioso*, *las medias*, *los resultados*, *los afectos*, *el mundo tercero*, *la destinación*, *las Olimpicas*, *el gobierno europeo* , *calificaciones vs cualificaciones*, *minoridades*, *un otro* and *una otra* instead of just *otro/otra*

expressions such as *es depende*, *es vale*, *es necesita*, *es importancia*, *es ridiculoso*, *es puede*, *no es importancia*, *es debe que*.
English verbs given a Spanish ending: *restringir*, *afordar*, *accesar*, *permitir*, *suportar*, *promovar*, *resolver*, *involvido*, *invertir*

Good students stood out with:

Complex sentences with relative pronouns
Use of phrases such as '*ya que*', '*entonces*', *por eso*', '*por consecuencia*', '*no solo eso sino también*', '*sobre todo*', '*lo que quiero decir es que*' '*y además*'.
Correct comparatives.
Correct use of pronouns.
Correct and appropriate use of the subjunctive.
Correct verb endings, varied tenses,
Correct use of the reflexive.
Correct prepositions following verbs.
Natural use of conversational joiners like "*Lo que pasa es que....*"
"*comprendo lo que dice pero....*" "*bueno en algunos casos pero en otros es....*"

Idiomatic expressions and lexis such as: *funciona como un freno* / *hay quienes dicen que no sería sostenible* / *lanzaría la iniciativa de la adopción* / *la reinserción social* / *si hubiera una solución efectiva ya habríamos erradicado la pobreza* / *es una aberración* / *por esa regla de tres* / *caricaturas de muy mal gusto* / *estar rabiando de dolor* / *de la noche a la mañana* / *apenas hay seguridad alguna* / *muchas mujeres han dado a luz* / *países que presumen de ..* / *la brecha salarial* / *un sistema disuasorio* / *esta gran fuente de ingresos desaparecería* / *la fuga de cerebros* / *conseguir paridad* / *es la culpa de nuestra sociedad patriarcal* / *se ausentan del trabajo* / *condenar de por vida* / *pendientes resbaladizas* / *lidiar con mucho dolor* / *es como si fuera una espada de doble filo* / *acuerdos bilaterales* / *endurecer los requisitos* / *el libre albedrío* / *las notas de corte* / *la obesidad mórbida* / *convocar huelgas* / *brindar apoyo* / *no habrá vuelta atrás* /

convalidar su titulación / desde que entró en vigor / ha calado en la sociedad / los casquetes polares / defunciones / los cuidados paliativos

In some cases the pronunciation of some words, especially those close to the English, gave rise to some difficulty. For example:
difícil..fácil..idea..usan..policía..problema..variedad..sociedad..Europa..eutan asia.

Also the incorrect pronuntiation of the silent 'h' For example: alcohol became *alcojol*, *ahorrar* became *ajorrar*, etc.

Intonation - some students seem to pay no attention to authentic-sounding intonation, natural pauses and conversational interaction. Without these sometimes it was difficult to understand what was being said, even if the pronunciation of the words was relatively accurate.

Students should be encouraged to use the language of debate and teachers might like to introduce idioms that aid this kind of dialogue such as:
a mi parecer, a mi modo de ver, estoy convencida que, admito que, yo también lo veo así, además, no solo eso sino también, no se puede negar que, lo que quiero decir es que, hay excepciones, de acuerdo a, según, no comparto este punto de vista, no estoy de acuerdo con lo que dices porque, entiendo lo que dice, pero, hay que tener en cuenta que, etc.

Teacher Examiner's performance

Conduct of the examination

Most teacher examiners conducted excellent tests. They had carefully read the oral training guide, the examiner's report as well as the teacher/examiner handbook and followed all the guidelines. To reward the student's ability to understand spoken Spanish these examiners asked clear, uncluttered and yet challenging questions using a variety of structures and lexis. They listened to the detail of what their students said and followed their lead.

However, in a few cases teacher examiners spoke too much and asked long and some quite convoluted questions, interrupted/ corrected the student or, dominated the exchange. This was to the disadvantage of their students.

Timing

The specification is clear about the timing required for the Unit 3 exam. In Part 1 - the debate, the student should introduce his or her stance for up to 1 minute (it is not essential that the student uses the whole minute for this) after which the examiner should interrupt so the debate continues for a further 4 minutes before the examiner moves on to the discussion section (Part 2). The whole oral should last between 11 -13 minutes.

Centres are reminded here that it would be unnatural for any discussion to adhere precisely to the quoted timings as there needs to be a smooth transition from one topic to another. Nevertheless, the timings of the

examination should remain as close as possible to those indicated in the specification.

In the cases where the tests were short the agreed penalty was applied to the test and resulted in a loss of marks. Where tests were too long examiner stopped listening at the end of the next sentence once 13 minutes had passed.

Centre Performance

Recording

- Tracks on CD/USB should be clearly labelled.
- Labels should not be stuck onto CDs/USBs that could impede the function of the medium.
- The relevant student's number must be entered on the OR form.
- Forms must be signed by both student and teacher.
- CD/USBs should be adequately packed / protective packaging.

The quality of recording should be clear. Occasionally the examiners placed the microphone closer to the teacher examiner rather than to the student, as a consequence, recordings were difficult to hear.

Students should be discouraged from tapping pens, rattling keys or any other noise that interferes with the recording.

Before sending the CD to the examiner it is important that the centre double checks that all recordings are on the disc.

Documentation

A few centres failed to send the attendance registers. Occasionally the OR forms included 'the stance on the issue' written in English rather than in Spanish as required.

Teacher Examiners:

Advice and Guidance

- Examiners need to observe the appropriate timing for both parts of the examination.
- Students must choose a controversial issue that easily lends itself to debate and they must make sure it is phrased correctly '*Estoy a favor de..*' '*Estoy en contra de..*'.
- Students need to undertake reading and research to provide supporting evidence for their arguments.
- Examiners should challenge the student's views so that they are given suitable opportunities to demonstrate their ability to argue their case and justify their opinion. If there is no debate the penalty cap will be applied, as per the Marking guidance sheet.
- Students should not be given advance knowledge of the issues to be raised during the examination or learn their answers by heart as this

lack of spontaneity will be reflected in the application of the mark scheme. In particular a minimum marks allocation for Response.

- Examiners need to ask sufficiently complex and challenging questions to allow their students to access the full range of marks available for Comprehension and Development. Please note questions can be linguistically challenging or conceptually challenging. Complexity can be achieved through the response individual questions require.
- The student and the examiner should respond appropriately to each other's input. To reach the full range of the marking criteria there should be frequent examples of spontaneous discourse.
- Examiners must make sure that the second part of the exam is not a re-run of the Unit 1 oral test. For students to access the higher marks they must show progression from AS to A2
- Examiners must remember that the second part of the exam is a discussion not a debate.
- Examiners should not introduce too many follow up issues to allow the student to produce depth of discussion and development of opinions.
- Centres should not rotate the same two or three issues for all their students but rather personalise each examination for each individual student.
- Examiners should not correct or finish students' responses.
- Examiners should not re-phrase what the student has said to clarify meaning or "interpret" what the student meant.

Conclusion

The outcome of the examination of this unit this summer was pleasing. The majority of centres had prepared their students thoroughly so they had a good understanding of the requirements of this unit. This allowed students to respond well to its demands.

