



**General Certificate of Education**

**Spanish 1696**  
*Specification*

**SPA2T      Speaking**

**Report on the Examination**  
*2011 examination - January series*

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## General Comments

In the majority of cases the tests were administered and conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in the pink booklet *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*. Many more tests are now recorded digitally and submitted on CD or memory stick and are of much better quality than those recorded on audio cassette. This sometimes has the unfortunate result that background noises are more clearly heard. It was evident that candidates were occasionally distracted by doors slamming, telephones ringing and so on. Centres are also reminded of the need to label CDs and memory sticks clearly and to ensure that they are carefully packed to avoid being damaged in the post.

There were some teacher-examiners who had not read the pink booklet and whose conduct of the tests resulted in their candidates being disadvantaged. The most common errors were failing to cover one or more of the four prescribed topics and not using the timings appropriately. Part 1 should take 5 minutes, roughly half of which should be spent on the printed questions and in Part 2 the 10 minutes should be divided evenly between the three remaining topics. There is no benefit to the candidate in prolonging the test beyond 15 minutes. However, tests which are too short may attract lower marks. The Mark Scheme states that where discussion of a topic lasts less than two minutes the mark for Interaction will be reduced by one band (2 marks).

### Part 1: Discussion of stimulus card

It was evident once again that candidates had been well-prepared for this part of the test and frequently achieved full marks for answering the printed questions. In general teacher-examiners conducted the "wider discussion" in accordance with the guidelines, remaining within the subtopic and developing the ideas raised by candidates in their response to the printed questions. Candidates failed to score well when they spent either too much or too little time on the printed questions and when teacher-examiners conducted a discussion based entirely on pre-rehearsed questions and answers with no reference to the original stimulus.

#### ***Tarjeta A - ¿Es éste el estilo de vida de los adolescentes de hoy en día?***

This was a popular choice. Most candidates began well by giving a description of the photograph in answer to the first question and relating this to *sedentarismo*. Question 2 gave more capable students the opportunity to use *recomendaría que* with a subjunctive. Good answers were also given using simpler language such as *Pienso que el chico debería...* Most candidates were able to talk about the benefits of exercise, were in favour of compulsory sports in school and were aware of the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle. Clearly students identify with the topic and have studied it in some depth. There were some very good developments of the stimulus bringing in extreme sports, obesity and the influence of the Olympic Games. Teachers and candidates are reminded that the discussion in Part 1 must remain within the subtopic on the card. In some cases the subtopic Sport/exercise was abandoned and the discussion focussed on diet, a subject related to the subtopic Health and well-being. While it is natural and acceptable for candidates to mention that the boy in the picture is eating fast food, it will disadvantage the candidate if the teacher focuses on this aspect in the context of this particular card. Common language errors involved confusion of the words *salud sano/sana* and failure to make the reflexive pronoun at the end of *mantenerse* agree with the subject. *Me gusta mantenerse en forma* was frequently heard. Many candidates attempted the present continuous *está viendo la tele* but not always with success.

**Tarjeta B - La música en vivo**

This was also a popular choice. Question 1 elicited interesting descriptions of the photograph and comments about the price of tickets. In response to Question 2, many candidates avoided the use of the conditional and used a past tense to talk about concerts they had attended. A number of candidates used the question to state their preference for other genres of music and made a clear distinction between pop and rock. A few candidates ignored the phrase *en vivo* in Question 3 and talked about the attractions of listening to music in general. Most candidates seem to have experienced open air concerts and had plenty to say in answer to Question 4. Question 5 was poorly understood and few related it to the price of CDs and concert tickets which many did not appear to find unreasonable. The card was usually developed well by teachers who asked why they thought concerts were so expensive, whether artists were too highly paid and what they thought about the illegal downloading of music from the Internet. Lack of some basic vocabulary was a problem for some candidates who said *libre/libro* for *libra*, *billete* for *entrada* and *atmósfera* for *ambiente*. Some failed to conjugate *costar* correctly and the pronunciation of *concierto* varied.

**Tarjeta C - Síntomas de la ciberadicción**

Candidates who chose this card had plenty of ideas and opinions about the use of the Internet and were able to express them in Spanish. Some made a good attempt to summarise the information on the card while less able candidates tended simply to read them out. Question 2 was well answered with many admitting to sharing the first symptom but stating firmly that they never forgot to eat. There were mixed feelings about whether cyber addiction is an illness but an overwhelming belief in the positive value of the Internet. In response, teachers often developed the discussion with further questions about the disadvantages of the Internet and the role played by parents in protecting their children from its dangers. It was disappointing to come across teachers who ignored the interesting ideas raised by their candidates and proceeded to a discussion of mobile phones. There were few common language errors, apart from the gender and pronunciation of *síntomas*.

**Tarjeta D - La nueva táctica de marketing**

This card was the least popular and the least well done. Many students said that it was about advertising expensive products in films and television programmes but failed to appreciate the distinction between overt forms of advertising and more covert product placement. Consequently many candidates gave unsophisticated responses to Questions 3 and 4 and very few had any reservations about the acceptability of subliminal messages. In answer to Question 5 many candidates referred to the positive function of public information broadcasts on television warning of the dangers of smoking, alcohol and driving too fast although it is questionable whether this is really advertising as such. The encouragement of consumerism caused little concern and there were some candidates who thought that television advertising was good as it presented an opportunity to have a snack or take a toilet break.

**Tarjeta E - Románticos modernos**

Reactions to this card were mixed. Some candidates interpreted the picture as the wedding itself, ignoring the caption which referred to *pedir la mano*. Attempts to describe what was happening in the photograph highlighted many gaps in vocabulary. There were references to *en el mar* or *en el agua*, but surprisingly *esquí acuático* was not mentioned although *windsurf* was. Question 2 often produced short answers such as *es divertido* and *es diferente*. However there were some more thoughtful and original answers such

as the one from a male candidate who said he would be afraid of dropping the ring and a female candidate who was worried about the state her dress would be in. In general candidates expressed fairly traditional views about weddings and marriage although answers to Question 5 suggested that it did not matter very much whether a couple were married or not. The card was well developed by teachers who asked whether couples should co-habit before marrying, what candidates thought of same-sex marriage and whether it was important to preserve romance in a marriage. There were problems again with reflexive pronouns in complex constructions such as *me gustaría casarse*. Candidates are advised to practise the pronunciation of *pareja*.

### **Tarjeta F - Una chica: dos “looks”**

Candidates who did this card understood the message, but few described the two photographs in detail by making use of the vocabulary supplied in the caption. Opinions varied as to whether boys can achieve such a radical transformation but the opportunity to raise the issue of boys using make-up and hair products was largely missed. Question 4 elicited somewhat superficial answers and only a few ventured the more productive suggestion: *depende de la situación...* Question 5 also illustrated the tendency of many candidates to attempt a yes/no answer rather than thinking around the question like the candidate who said *no cambiamos de personalidad, pero quizás cambiemos de comportamiento*. There were also some interesting references to *las tribus urbanas* in response to Question 5. The more general discussion moved on to high street fashion, the influence of models and celebrities and more permanent ways of altering one's appearance using tattoos or cosmetic surgery. The stimulus showed up the difficulties candidates often have in talking about appearance: *me gusta mirar bien* and *cambiar su mirada* are typical examples. Examiners noted the poor pronunciation of *apariencia* and *maquillaje*.

## **Part 2: Conversation**

This part of the test was conducted well in the majority of centres. The remaining three topics were covered and timings were adhered to. It was apparent that many candidates were Year 13s resitting and this was reflected in generally high marks for Fluency, Pronunciation and Grammar. The same was not true for the Interaction marks which were lower in some centres because of lack of evidence of spontaneity. Teachers can help their candidates to improve marks for Interaction by offering “opportunities to express and develop views and opinions”. This cannot be achieved by allowing candidates to deliver pre-learnt answers lasting a minute or more in response to the suggested starter questions. It is essential that teachers listen carefully and follow up wherever possible on what the candidates have said rather than working through a list of set questions. It is clear in the Mark Scheme that **evidence** of spontaneity is required for a mark above 6/10 for Interaction.

The nominated topic is part of the general conversation and the same principles apply as to the remaining topics. The candidate should not be invited to deliver a mini presentation on their nominated topic, but should respond to specific questions based on the points set out on their cue card.

## **Pronunciation/Intonation**

Pronunciation was a little disappointing this series given that many centres have teachers who are native speakers. Candidates could improve their marks by paying careful attention to the pronunciation of vowels and to the consonants *c*, *s*, *z*, *j* and *g*. It is also important to place the stress correctly on common words such as *fácil*, *difícil* and *teléfonos móviles*. Candidates who adopt the seseo should aim to use it consistently.

## Knowledge of Grammar

There were few candidates whose language was judged less than a “reasonable performance” (10-12) and many who were able to use “a variety of linguistic structures...effectively” (13-15). It was felt that overall there was an improvement in the accuracy of verbs and tenses as candidates made more effort to use the correct endings even though it sometimes took two or three attempts to get to the right one. Many candidates had worked hard to master hypothetical “if” sentences using the imperfect subjunctive and conditional construction. They should, however, be discouraged from over-use of this construction to the point where it is not “effective” but merely irritating. This is especially so when accompanied by serious errors in the conjugation of basic verbs such as *sabo*, *teneré*, *he hecho*, and *dicieron*. Ultimately it is the clarity with which relevant information is communicated that attracts marks rather than elaborate phrases that convey little meaning.

Other common errors noted by markers include:

Stem changing verbs: *empiezo, pensamos, jugué, la gente pensan*

Confusion of adjective/adverb: *demasiado, tanto, mucho*

Gender: *la problema, una día, las padres, los madres, las programas*

Adjectival agreements: *las drogas peligrosos, mucha dinero, la habito mala*

Apocoptation of adjectives: *gran, buen, primer*

Indirect object pronouns with *gustar*

*Ser* and *estar*

Infinitive after modal verb: *me gusta veo*

Prepositions: *posible de, responsable para*

Assorted wrongly learnt phrases: *tener un buen tiempo, tan mucho, es necesito, es dependiente*

On the positive side markers noted the correct use of subjunctives with *es importante que, es un escándalo que, es mejor que, es difícil que* and also the use of impersonal phrases like *es esencial que, es obvio que* without the subjunctive. Candidates are also to be commended on their acquisition of a range of topic-specific vocabulary used to good effect throughout the test.

The level of achievement in this series was generally very high. It is unfortunate that candidates sometimes failed to get the marks they deserved because tests were not conducted according to the instructions. Teachers who are unsure of the requirements of the test are advised to refer to the sample material available on the AQA website and to attend the Teacher Support Meetings in the Autumn term.

## Annual Teacher Support Meetings

Centres are reminded that language-specific Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2011 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 Events page of the AQA website ([www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)) in due course.

## **Web Pages**

Centres are reminded that a wealth of support documents can be found on our web pages ([http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/spanish\\_materials.php?id=09&prev=09](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/spanish_materials.php?id=09&prev=09)).

These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, Reports on the Examination, Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For SPA2 the TRB includes advice to teachers conducting your own tests and the materials from the most recent set of Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests; this is an invaluable resource for preparing candidates for future examinations.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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