



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2012**

**Spanish**

**SPA2TV**

**(Specification 2695)**

**Unit 2: Speaking Test**

***Report on the Examination***

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## General Comments

The requirements of the Speaking tests are now well-known and visiting examiners usually found everything in place for a smooth completion of their task. The majority of teacher-conducted tests were competently conducted and accurately timed. However, schools and teachers who are new to this examination should study carefully the *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*, accessible via the AQA website, to ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test. Teachers should note that tests on memory stick or CD should be saved as .mp3 files and labelled following the model shown on page 8 of the *Instructions*. Schools are also reminded that 2013 will be the last year in which tests may be submitted on audio cassette.

Students did not have access to the highest marks when the following guidelines were not observed:

### Timings

In Part 1, no longer than 2½ minutes should be taken up by the printed questions, leaving a further 2½ minutes for the wider discussion.

In Part 2, each of the three remaining topics should be allocated 3 - 3½ minutes.

### Spontaneity

Students must show evidence of their ability to react spontaneously. Long, pre-learnt answers or a scripted conversation will attract low marks for Interaction.

### Topics

Each of the 4 set topics must be addressed in the 15 minutes. Part 1 must remain within the sub-topic stated on the card. In Part 2, any aspect of the whole topics may be discussed.

### Part 1: Discussion of the Stimulus Card

Most students have been well-trained to make full use of their 20 minutes preparation time to draft relevant answers to the printed questions on the stimulus cards and to deliver them within the time allocated. It is not uncommon now for students to achieve full marks for the printed questions. However, some markers noted an increasing trend towards brief, superficial answers to the first question. Answers to question 1 must contain some idea of the main issue on the card, usually a particular slant on some aspect of the sub-topic. It is hoped that the stimulus cards will provoke a thoughtful response to these issues rather than a repetition of received ideas and pre-learnt responses. Teacher-examiners are reminded that they should

- use all the stimulus cards where possible
- refrain from asking any supplementary questions between the printed ones
- ensure that the wider discussion remains within the sub-topic of the card
- discourage long pre-learnt speeches
- limit their use of “suggested” and rehearsed questions
- listen and respond to what the student says and so encourage spontaneity

### **Tarjeta A - ¿Bebés sin padre?**

This card was not universally popular but tended to be chosen by able candidates who understood the implications and were able to express mature views. The illustration of the syringe on the card led a few students into supposing that the father was a drug addict. Question 2 elicited a wide range of reasons why a woman might choose to be a single parent, but most mentioned lesbian couples and women who had simply not found the right man (*su media naranja*). Opinions were roughly divided on the need for a father in the child's life. The role of the father, according to many students, is *jugar al fútbol con su hijo*. In general, fairly traditional views were expressed about the best type of family in which to raise children, many referring to *la familia nuclear*. However there were many positive comments about being part of a single parent family. The quality of the wider discussion varied: the ones that achieved the lowest marks were set piece exchanges on the family in general which did not flow from the original stimulus. There were, however, many excellent discussions about the respective roles of mother and father, the potential problems of children of homosexual couples and the difficulties of bringing up a child single-handedly. It was common to hear *capable* instead of *capaz* and *soportar* to mean to support.

### **Tarjeta B - La evolución del teléfono**

Few students even attempted to refer to the dates on the card and those who did were not very successful. It was disappointing that so few pointed out the revolutionary change from fixed to mobile phones and it was rare to hear vocabulary such as *portátil* or *inalámbrico*. Otherwise this card produced good responses. Most students saw little use for a landline, other than to say that it is cheaper than a mobile. In response to question 4, some imaginative students suggested that in the future mobile phone "chips" might be implanted in the body or that the mobile phone would be indistinguishable from a computer. Others merely said mobiles would get smaller and/or cheaper. Answers to question 5 confirmed that this is a generation unable to contemplate life without a means of instant communication. Specific examples of situations in which contact with others is essential were, unfortunately, relatively infrequent. Discussions following the printed questions focused on the students' own use of their mobile, its various functions and occasionally its disadvantages. Most were able to use appropriate topic-specific vocabulary.

### **Tarjeta C - ¿Son importantes las marcas?**

Many students who chose this card identified strongly with the issues raised. Some interesting views were expressed about the sort of people who buy designer labels. The majority, being students, were cost-conscious and felt no need to imitate celebrities. Most agreed that we live in a materialistic society but were often unable to elaborate or give examples. In the wider discussion, some examiners raised the issue of the origin of cheap clothes and many students were able to refer to the use of child labour in poor countries. Individual styles, shopping habits and occasionally *tribus urbanas* such as *los góticos* were mentioned, bringing in piercings, tattoos and make-up. It was pleasing to hear the use of vocabulary such as *prenda* and less pleasing the frequent use of *las ropas*.

### **Tarjeta D - ¿Qué harás tú durante las vacaciones?**

This was the most popular card and many students saw it as an opportunity to recycle GCSE material. In answer to the first question, many tried to manipulate the text on the card, successfully substituting the future tense with the infinitive or even the present continuous. Question 4 elicited a wide variety of responses, often employing past tenses and describing their emotions. Some students whose holidays had always been positive sensibly talked about disasters experienced by friends and relatives. The opportunity to develop question 5

into a wider discussion about the potential health hazards posed by going on holiday was not sufficiently exploited by examiners. Much more could have been said about the dangers of too much sun, food poisoning, insect bites, injuries resulting from sporting activities or alcohol abuse, infections and inadequate medical services in some countries. Language errors frequently noted were *las turistas; es muy calor* and *dos años pasados* instead of *hace dos años*.

### **Tarjeta E - Música para todos los gustos**

Most students were comfortable discussing their own musical tastes and the verb *gustar* was widely but not always successfully used. In answer to question 2, asking what type of music irritated them, some students insisted on talking about their favourite music instead. Students are reminded that marks are awarded for addressing the question directly and not for general remarks about the subtopic area. Question 5 was widely misunderstood and there were many answers referring to musicals such as *Cats*. The caption on the card suggesting possible ideas for development in the wider discussion (*edades, culturas* and *clases sociales*) were largely ignored, apart from some very stereotypical views about classical music only being enjoyed by old people. Despite *tocar un instrumento* being given on the card, some students used the verb *jugar*.

### **Tarjeta F - El fútbol femenino**

This card was less popular than the others, but it was well done by those who chose it. Few attempted to refer to the dates or expressed any surprise that women have been playing football for over a century. Both male and female students expressed positive opinions about women's football and very few believed that there were masculine or feminine sports. The popularity of football was usually attributed to its simplicity (*sólo necesitas un balón y dos camisetas*) and frequent exposure on television. The wider discussions explored the health benefits of participating in sports, the advantages of team games over individual sporting activities and the influence of the forthcoming Olympics. Hardly anyone developed the theme of gender and sporting activity.

## **Part 2: Conversation**

### **Nominated topic**

Visiting examiners sometimes find that the cue cards on which they must base their discussion of the nominated topic are somewhat thin and predictable. The cue card is the student's opportunity to determine the direction of the discussion of their first topic and a carefully considered cue card will ensure that the discussion achieves the quality of a "meaningful exchange". Students should be encouraged to go beyond the simple *las ventajas de... las desventajas de... mi favorito...* towards something more detailed such as *el uso de las modelos flacas en las pasarelas; el impacto del turismo en un país; la importancia de la comunicación en una familia*.

Markers commented on a certain permissiveness on the part of some teacher-examiners with regard to allowing or even actively encouraging pre-learned monologues when candidates begin their nominated topic. A typical introduction would be *Háblame un poco sobre la familia de hoy en día* after which the monologue could last over a minute. It is probable that such practices will attract the descriptor "generally dependent on the examiner" and limit the Interaction mark to 4/10.

Each of the three topics in the conversation should be discussed for 3 to 3½ minutes. Where less than two minutes is spent on any topic the mark for Interaction will be reduced by one band.

## Fluency

Markers reported an improvement in Fluency this series with very many students scoring 4 or 5.

## Interaction

Comments from markers of centre-conducted tests suggest that more teacher-examiners are aware of the need to show spontaneity. This series there were fewer examples of tests consisting of a question and answer session with no follow-up questions to develop the students' responses. Although there are still cases of the over-use of the "suggested" questions inviting pre-learnt monologues, they appear to be less common than in previous series.

## Pronunciation and Intonation

Many students who scored 4 for Fluency could have improved their performance with a little more effort to pronounce vowels more crisply especially where poor pronunciation can change the meaning as in *creer; crear; criar*. More care should be taken over the placing of stress in words such as *teléfono móvil, jóvenes, portátil* and on the final *ó* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the preterite e.g. *gustó, habló, olvidó* etc. That said, performances that were awarded 3 (Intelligible) or less were rare.

## Knowledge of Grammar

Positive points noted by examiners included:

Range of tenses used correctly  
Use of subordinate clauses  
Use of the subjunctive in the present tense  
Conditional sentences using the imperfect subjunctive  
Object pronouns

Negative points included:

*Ser/estar*  
Gender of nouns  
Agreement of adjectives  
Radical changing verbs  
Confusion of imperfect and conditional forms  
*Gustar* and other verbs requiring the indirect object  
Prepositions following verbs e.g. *dependen de; consisten de*  
English word order, especially prepositions at the end of sentences  
Anglicisms such as *no es sobre; porque de; tener un buen tiempo*  
Confusion of *saber/conocer*

Examiners also expressed surprise at the lack of consolidation of weather expressions and numbers. The accumulation of expressions to introduce an opinion *En mi opinión, creo que...* ; *a mi modo de ver, desde mi punto de vista...* is also increasingly heard. Notwithstanding, the overall impression of students' grammatical knowledge was slightly more positive than in past series.

### **Teacher Support Meetings**

Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2012 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.

Please note that this series of meetings will be the final opportunity to attend face to face training following Ofqual's decision to restrict face to face support for teachers. All materials used at the meetings in Autumn 2012 will be placed in the Teacher Resource Bank on AQA's website and will be available to download throughout the academic year.

### **Web Pages**

Schools 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). The TRB includes advice to teachers conducting your own tests and the materials from the Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students 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.

### **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion).