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Edexcel

Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
In Spanish (1SP0) Paper 2H: Speaking

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## **Introduction**

In general, Centres have adapted well to the format of the new examination and have become more familiar with the demands of the paper and the style of questioning. Most teachers and students prepared well and approached the exam with a clear understanding of what was expected of them. However in some cases careless mistakes were made, perhaps the most serious of which was that of offering the students the wrong cards – for instance Foundation when they had been entered for Higher – and this disadvantaged the students significantly as no marks could be awarded for the Role Play nor for Communication and Content on the Picture card. Some students seem to have been entered at the wrong level with high achieving students who could have coped well at Higher Level being examined for Foundation and others struggling with the Higher Level exam who could have performed better at Foundation.

### **TASK 1 : THE ROLE PLAY**

The role play is marked for Communication only, unlike the Picture based Task and the Conversation. Short, relevant answers were all that were necessary to access the full marks. A number of students clearly thought they would do better to give unnecessarily developed responses and at times the teachers encouraged this by treating the role play as an extended conversation. Such practice is a waste of time and effort as there are no extra marks for long, developed conversations. Answers should be brief and to the point. Students sometimes lost marks by careless use of verbs – using 'fue' instead of 'fui' creates ambiguity and therefore loses marks. Occasionally students ignored the question mark in front of the bullet point and made a statement rather than asking a question, thereby forfeiting the marks.

Teachers generally conducted the examinations professionally, although some deprived their students of the marks by straying from the scripted questions, paraphrasing or adding extra information. It is important to understand that any unscripted interjection from the teacher that could give an advantage to the student immediately invalidates any response from the student. The most common example of this was '¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?' and the student's response was then ignored. A few teachers failed to read out the introduction as scripted, an omission that could affect the student's performance. More serious was the occasional omission of one of the bullet point questions and this clearly threw the students as well as losing them marks.

Most role plays offered similar degrees of difficulty with, perhaps, the one involving lost property proving to be the least successful, especially with the question '¿Qué pasó exactamente?' Equally, a significant number of students did not understand what 'datos personales' meant and either thought the question was referring to dates or gave information about their character instead – for instance, 'Soy muy trabajador'. There were further vocabulary problems with the words for 'tip' (in a restaurant), 'waiting room' and 'customer service'. The word 'sueldo' also caused problems at times.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles agreed across all modern languages:

- Where a student has used the wrong register this is ignored unless it impedes communication. However, if the teacher strays from the script and changes the register of the question this gives the student an unfair advantage and the student's response is deemed to be invalid.
- If a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question, there can be no credit for a response made by the student.
- Where a student has offered an incorrect response to a question, the teacher may not repeat the question. If s/he does so and the student then gives a correct response, this is ignored.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not re-phrase any of the questions.
- Any prompt added by the teacher, for instance ¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?, will invalidate the student's response.

## TASK 2 : THE PICTURE-BASED TASK

Most students did well and had prepared carefully and thoroughly for the Picture based Task questions during the 12 minute period allocated for preparation time. Unlike the Role Play, there were marks available for extended answers in Communication and Content as well as marks for the Knowledge and Accuracy of language. Students were expected not only to develop their responses but also to express opinions and justify them and to narrate and describe events. Two of the bullet points required the use of the past and future tenses or time frames and at Higher Level, students had to contend with an unexpected question that prompted an opinion from the student on an aspect of the topic. As with the Role Plays, teachers must keep to the script without changing or paraphrasing any of the questions and without adding any supplementary, unscripted questions. If they do, then again they will deprive their students of marks and any extraneous questions together with the responses are ignored.

For the first question – Describe the picture – the students were well rehearsed into uttering useful expressions such as 'hay', 'en la foto puedo ver', 'a la derecha', 'a la izquierda', 'en el fondo' and 'veo' which helped them to develop and extend their responses. The best students went methodically through the picture with descriptions of the people, their physical appearance, clothes, colours and paying attention to the background setting. A number of students often gave developed answers to the picture description in bullet point 1 but thereafter gave much shorter, undeveloped responses to subsequent questions. Weaker students should be encouraged to describe the picture in more detail; often the description was very short and minimal.

It is important to make use of the scripted follow-up questions - ¿Algo más? or ¿Por qué (no)? - to encourage students to extend their responses and aim for higher marks. Conversely, asking for ¿Algo más? when a student has already given a very full and detailed response is counter-productive. Inevitably there

were problems with pronunciation, for instance with basic language such as 'hay' and there were over-used phrases such as 'me gusta porque es divertido / interesante' and 'en mi opinión' (frequently with an anglicised rendering of 'opinion'). The most frequently used words were 'divertido', 'interesante', 'aburrido' and 'importante'. A number of students found it difficult to differentiate between tenses in answering questions relating to the past or the future.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles agreed across all the modern languages:

- Students must make reference to the visual image in response to the first bullet point question.
- Where a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question which is not scripted, there can be no credit for a response made by the student.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not rephrase any of the questions.
- If the teacher misses out a question or the question is not answered, the examiner will drop one band in the assessment grid for Communication and Content only.

### TASK 3 : THE CONVERSATIONS

Students were required to participate in two conversations, the first on a topic selected and prepared by them and the second on an unprepared topic selected by Edexcel Pearson. An equal amount of time should have been allocated to each of the conversations and the total time was 3½ - 4½ minutes at Foundation and 5 – 6 minutes at Higher. It is essential to keep strictly to the timings and avoid any imbalance between the 2 conversations or any shortfall or excess in timings. Most teachers kept strictly to the timings, put their students at their ease using a friendly tone of voice and spoke clearly and slowly so that the students had little or no problems in understanding the questions. However, in some cases the teachers allowed the first conversation to overrun thus restricting the time available for the second conversation. Since examiners stop listening when the full time is up, the shortness of the second conversation affected the final marks awarded.

For the first Conversation, students should be encouraged to introduce the topic they have chosen for up to one minute prior to the interaction with the teacher. It is equally important to ensure that they are not allowed to go on beyond the 1 minute and teachers should interrupt with their first question if the student seems determined to continue with a monologue. Unsurprisingly, the first prepared conversation was often more successful than the second and it was noticeable how the weaker students frequently found it difficult to complete their sentences as they struggled to find the right vocabulary, grammatical structures or verb tenses. Some centres clearly encourage their students to use heavily rehearsed sentences and phrases in Conversation 1, for instance 'Mi padre, que tiene mala leche...' or 'llevarse como el perro y el gato' and 'ser uña y carne'. At times students who had been prepared in this manner gave robotic responses

which often appeared to show little understanding of the language, for instance '¡Ay, qué horror' delivered in an unenthusiastic monotone. However the second, unprepared conversation often gave a better guide to the students' fluency and ability.

Some teachers are still relying on a list of prepared questions and in some extreme cases all the students had been directed to prepare the same topic for their Conversation 1, even to the extent of providing identical introductions for the first minute. Moreover, the teacher read out exactly the same questions to each of the students so that the examination became a question and answer session instead of a spontaneous conversation. Some teachers had clearly not been listening carefully to what the students were saying and confused them by asking questions the answers to which had already been covered in the initial presentation. These are examples of bad practice and against the spirit of the exam. The Conversations should be allowed to develop naturally and the teachers should listen carefully to what the student is saying and build the conversation accordingly. It is certainly worth preparing topic related questions in advance in case the conversation grinds to a halt but it is not a good idea to rely exclusively on prepared questions as this destroys spontaneity and the natural flow of conversation. Some students were disadvantaged because the teacher failed to ask any questions that required the use of a tense other than the present.

Again, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles that have been agreed across all modern languages:

- Foundation Conversations should last for between 3½ and 4½ minutes while Higher Conversations should last between 5 and 6 minutes.
- Timings begin with the student's first utterance.
- Conversations that are too short are likely to be self-penalising.
- Conversations that are too long: once the 4½ (F) or 6 (H) minutes have passed, examiners stop listening and assessing at the end of the student's response to the current question.
- An equal amount of time must be allocated to each Conversation.
- Where the first Conversation is a monologue and has no interaction, students will be limited to a maximum score of 6 marks for Interaction and Spontaneity. The marks for Communication and Content and Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy, however, are unaffected.

The most popular choices of Topics for the first Conversation were Holidays, School life and Educational visits and there was a significant number of prepared conversations on the Environment which allowed students to demonstrate their competence in specialised vocabulary. Again, however, the second, unprepared conversation often adjusted the balance when marks were awarded globally.

## ADMINISTRATION

Most Centres followed the instructions to the letter, ensuring that the Register and CS2s were included with the samples. However, some Centres had to be contacted either to submit the missing CS2 form or to re-submit the form with the signatures of the teacher and the student added. Some Centres sent the old style CS2 form which made it difficult for examiners to enter the marks. It is essential that Centres use the correct up to date CS2 forms. Most recordings this year were generally clear and free from background noise – shouting in the corridor, bells ringing or Tannoy announcements – although a few Centres submitted recordings that were very difficult to hear. Some Centres are still submitting CDs rather than USB sticks, even though this practice has been discontinued; all recordings should now be on USB sticks. This year the submission of encrypted recordings created serious problems of accessibility and delay when the password was missing.

It is very useful if teachers can announce the Role Play card number and the Picture Card number at the start of the tasks, as well as the Theme for each of the Conversations at the beginning of each one. Most centres applied the sequence correctly although some made mistakes and included a note of apology or an explanation. At times following the grid caused some confusion and several centres failed to do so correctly resulting in themes being repeated. Even when the sequence was not applied strictly, however, most of the centres did make sure that the students covered four themes (Role Play + Picture Task + Conversation 1 + Conversation 2). Some tasks were used less frequently than others, maybe due to sequence and the choice of the topic for the first conversation.