

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE Spanish (5SP02) Paper 2A

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Moderator Report

Most candidates were well prepared for the speaking tests. Teacher examiners had equipped them with excellent resources and instructions and conducted the tests in a professional and encouraging manner. The most popular task types were the Presentation and the Picture-based Discussion with fewer centres and candidates opting for the Open Interaction.

Presentations

The most popular topics were free time, mainly sports and hobbies, holidays, health and healthy eating and work experience. A topic such as healthy living often leads to an interesting discussion, but does not lend itself readily to much unambiguous use of tenses other than the present and consequently some candidates lost marks for range of language. Many candidates prepared thoroughly for their Presentations and were able to demonstrate a full range of tenses, complex structures and confidently delivered language. However, frequent drops in performance were apparent in the subsequent interactions with the teacher examiners.

Some centres allowed their candidates to extend their pre-learnt Presentations beyond the 3 minutes allowed and then cut short the remaining time so that there was little evidence of the candidate's ability to converse spontaneously and naturally. The Presentations for some other candidates lasted less than a minute and therefore the marks awarded were limited. It is essential that Presentations should last for a minimum of 1 minute and a maximum of 3 minutes and that adequate time should then be allowed for interaction. Moreover, many interactions focused on no other tense but the present and these strategies limited the candidate's potential to access the higher bands for Content and Response and Range of Language. Typical discussions on likes and dislikes, starting and ending times and descriptions of family members did not always allow candidates to demonstrate more detailed knowledge.

Whilst some candidates were tested with some unpredictable questions, enabling them to access the higher marks for Content, too often centres prepared candidates with a set of similar or even identical questions (and answers) which gave a pre-learnt feel to the conversations.

Picture-based Discussions

These were often the most successful tasks, helped by the tangible evidence that the candidates had in front of them as they responded to questions. Many of the tests focused on description of a holiday, family celebrations or photos of a favourite celebrity and were both creative and interesting to listen to.

Well conducted orals involved the teacher examiner listening carefully to what the candidates were saying and following up the candidates' responses so that the tests became natural and authentic conversations. Regrettably there are still some centres that rely on a prepared list of questions to which the candidates have pre-learnt the responses so that the test becomes a question and answer session rather than a discussion. In these cases, there is no evidence of spontaneity either from the candidate or the teacher examiner and marks are limited.

Most candidates were able to communicate ideas and opinions, some simple and predictable and others sophisticated and complex, with very few unable to communicate anything of relevance. Middle-range candidates could improve their performance by connecting developed ideas with subordinate clauses instead of relying on three or four short sentences. In many cases ideas could be sequenced and better organised with a greater range of connectives.

Open-Interactions

Although the least popular of the 3 task types, these tasks were efficiently and imaginatively conducted by the teacher examiners and many candidates scored well. However, there were some centres where the teacher examiner's questions tended to be closed rather than open-ended and which consequently failed to elicit expansive and developed responses from the candidates. Some Open Interactions were inappropriate and it should be understood that a simple conversation, for example between the candidate and his or her Spanish friend played by the teacher examiner, is not an Open Interaction. Open Interactions require some kind of transaction between the two participants and there should be clearly defined roles for both the candidate and the teacher examiner to play.

In all three task types, the degree of anglicised pronunciation was most apparent when candidates read from notes, following rules and patterns of English. The most frequent examples of these were the English 'i' in words such as 'biología', 'director', 'divertido' and 'admiro' while 'camiseta' and 'comedia' often had an anglicised 'e'. The pronunciation of 'Hay' was also a problem and often came across as the English for dried grass. Poor consonants included the 'g' of 'geografía', 'religión' and 'gimnasio' as well as the 'qu' of 'quince', 'química', 'tranquilo', 'quedé' and 'pequeño'. Inconsistent use of 'fui' and 'fue' sometimes led to confusion and ambiguity and the mis-pronunciation of 'jugué' (pronounced 'juegué') gave rise to some incoherence. The Spanish double 'l' was often mispronounced with 'ellos' and 'ellas' and 'beber' sometimes sounded like 'vivir'.

Centre Marking

Marking by some Centres often tended towards generosity, particularly for Content and Response. It should be remembered that outstanding performance is typically characterised by comprehensive and detailed information, initiative and spontaneity as well as an ability to cope with the unpredictable. Pre-learnt

material will inevitably emerge during the conversation since candidates will have prepared the topic in advance, however elements of natural, free-flowing dialogue need to feature in order to access the higher marks. Frequently Centres rewarded candidates who were audibly struggling to remember rehearsed responses to known questions with marks intended for confident performances without undue hesitation. Hesitation is natural in everyday speech but when a candidate stops mid-sentence to search for the required vocabulary or structure and the conversation grinds to a halt then this should be reflected in the mark awarded. Range and Accuracy marks again tended to be generous though less so than for Content and Response. For a mark of 5 for Range of Language and Accuracy candidates need to demonstrate significant competence with a variety of tenses and good pronunciation. The ability to show a range of tenses purely with the verb 'ir' would be marked at the lower end of an 'adequate' performance and the use of just 'me gusta' is unlikely to achieve more than half marks. A common Accuracy error, not just with lower ability candidates, was the incorrect formation of plurals.

In a few isolated cases it was not obvious that staff had been given the opportunity to standardise their marking as considerable discrepancies emerged in the standard of marking between some teacher examiners within a centre.

Most recordings lasted between the prescribed 4 – 6 minutes and the quality was generally good with the microphone positioned to favour the candidate.

Administration

The continued move away from audio cassettes and towards CDs and Memory Sticks is to be welcomed. Recordings in mp3 format are much easier for centres and moderators to manage and are frequently more audible but clear labelling is essential. It is also important to record the orals under satisfactory conditions without extraneous noise from adjacent classrooms or during breaktime. There were significant problems with administration from some centres. There is still confusion as to which parts of the Optems to send to Edexcel and which to the moderator. One or two centres sent neither while others sent the top copy to the moderator when it should have been submitted to Edexcel. A number of centres are making the mistake of adding the 2A and 2B marks together and writing the total on the Optems form. It is also essential to check that recordings for all the asterisked candidates are submitted to the moderator as well as the Highest and Lowest scoring candidates in the centre who may or may not be part of the sample. Only 2A tests should be sent to the moderator; a number of centres submitted both 2A and 2B recordings on the same CD or Memory Stick. Within the sample sent to the moderator there must also be a variety of task types; a few centres sent nothing but Presentations and requests had to be made for examples of either Open Interactions or Picture-based Discussions before moderating could take place. Not all centres are using the new CM2 forms to record candidate marks and there were noticeable discrepancies between the marks entered on the hard copy mark sheets and those uploaded to the website. It is also essential to send the CA2 forms for each candidate to the moderator – left blank with the inscription Not Used if

necessary. The Stimuli used by the candidates in their preparation should also be submitted. All centres ensured that the Candidate Mark Sheets were signed by both the teacher examiners and the candidates. Many centres administered the tests and submitted the paperwork impeccably and are to be congratulated.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the speaking units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners have worked closely together to ensure their application of the common assessment criteria during moderation is consistently applied across these three languages. This has been in response to queries from centres about the results at unit level on the speaking Controlled Assessment.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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