
AS-LEVEL GERMAN

Unit 2 Speaking
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Visiting examiners encountered few problems when arranging their visits. In most cases, schools dispatched completed STMS forms and prompt cards to examiners on time. Students are reminded that bullet points on prompt cards should not contain a conjugated verb and should be written in German rather than in English. In most schools, examination and preparation rooms were appropriate although a few examiners found themselves in very small rooms making it difficult to accommodate the student, examiner and chaperone as well as all the paperwork.

Schools conducting their own tests are reminded of a few important points:

- On the recording, the candidate and the teacher have to be equally audible. In a number of schools the teacher's voice was much louder than the candidate's. It is important that schools check the sound quality before sending the recordings. There were also a few cases where the CD had no or only partially recorded tests.
- Tracks on CDs should be labelled digitally. Writing students' names and numbers only on the CD, as happened in many schools, is not helpful to the marker. As a minimum requirement, an insert listing each track and candidate needs to accompany the CD. Adequate labelling was usually not an issue with USB sticks.
- CDs need to be packed carefully. Some examiners found damaged or broken CDs and had to wait until a replacement could be supplied by the centre.
- STMS forms have to be completed as instructed with the nominated topic being entered in the appropriate box.
- Timing devices should not be stopped and re-set during the test as it inevitably leads to the test over-running and being out of sync with the examiner's timing. Examiners are instructed to stop marking at 15 minutes and the final topic of conversation may be in danger of being shorter than the minimum two minutes required resulting in a reduction of the interaction mark.
- Throughout the test, teachers should use the form of address the students are used to from the classroom; in most schools this is *du*. A number of teachers who appeared to use *Sie* just for the test frequently switched between the two forms. It is permissible and advisable to change the questions on the stimulus cards to the *du*-form.

Examiners commented that most students were well prepared for the format of the test and with some exceptions were eager to communicate their ideas. Markers of teacher-conducted tests were pleased to observe good examining technique at many schools where teachers employed skilful questioning, varied their questions and frequently followed up on students' responses in order to facilitate spontaneous development of ideas. On the other hand, many teachers were still anxious not to stray off familiar paths of questioning and relied heavily on a set list of questions which they usually asked every candidate regardless of ability. An oral examination is an innately artificial situation, but the more the test resembles a conversation (without over-participation by the examiner) and the less it feels like an interrogation through unrelated questions the better. If confident students are 'pushed' with more probing and less predictable questions they gain a sense of achievement. Less able students who have to rely to a greater extent on pre-learnt answers also need to be given the chance to show some spontaneity by being asked brief follow-up questions.

Part 1: Response to Stimulus

All five cards were equally accessible and vocabulary rarely caused any difficulty. Examiners observed a widespread reluctance among students to exploit the material on the chosen card to full advantage. Images, statistics and written information on each card are carefully chosen to give students opportunities to mention a variety of points in their prepared answers and to develop these sufficiently to fill approximately 2 ½ minutes. Many students lost out on top marks by not making better use of the stimulus material and not developing their responses consistently. On the

other hand, a few students took so long over their prepared answers that only little time was left for the discussion thereby reducing the likelihood of high marks in the second section.

Teachers are reminded that the discussion should arise as naturally as possible from the subject of the card and the students' answers to the printed questions. There were some outstanding examples where teachers clearly listened carefully to the students, picked up on points raised in the early part, asked for clarification and exploited the stimulus card further. However, all too often teacher-examiners moved immediately to a series of standard questions on the sub-topic that had no or very little relation to the theme of the card. Students who are allowed to produce entirely rehearsed answers in this section are not able to gain good marks. Teachers are also reminded that the discussion must stay within the sub-topic stated on the card; a number of teachers deviated from this ruling this year, especially with cards B, D and E.

Card A: Die neuen Sportarten

This was a popular choice and usually handled well. The best performances contained answers that developed the idea of *schnell, modern, aufregend* with examples; a few students state that young people like to frighten their parents by participating in these sports. Many answers to question 3 (*Welche Nachteile...?*) only mentioned one disadvantage; students need to read each question carefully so as to take on board subtle but important elements required for their responses. Unfortunately many students missed the word *nur* in the fourth question and talked solely about the importance of sport for young people thereby rendering their answer only partially relevant. As a consequence some otherwise good performances could not be given top marks. In the discussion students usually talked about their own sports activities, the benefits of participating in sport and sometimes about their personal attitude or ambitions regarding extreme sports.

Card B: Allein leben

Whilst all students who chose this card were clear about the subject matter it was disappointing that many students did not make better use of the material presented. Few mentioned the statistics and/or expressed views about the figures. Many answers to question 2 only referred to people's career ambitions as a reason for living alone but did not mention divorce or being widowed. *Nachteile* in question 3 was often ignored and many students used the cues underneath the pictures without appropriate re-phrasing or further development. There were good suggestions as to avoiding loneliness such as sports, hobbies, meeting friends but hardly any students considered the fact that older and widowed people may find it much harder to escape loneliness. Most students contributed well in the ensuing discussion on wider aspects of partnerships and marriage but a number of teacher-examiners went outside the sub-topic and focused largely on family relationships.

Card C: Strengere Kontrolle der Werbung?

This card produced mixed results since students often did not focus sufficiently on the precise theme of the stimulus. Some students did not seem to know about the long established ban for tobacco advertising on television. Many students talked predominantly about alcohol ignoring unhealthy food and in some cases seemed to think that a ban of alcohol itself was being proposed. *Maßnahme* in Question 3 was often not known or misunderstood rendering some responses irrelevant. Students have a choice of cards and should not select a card containing unfamiliar vocabulary. On the positive side, most students had a lot to say in the discussion and expressed clear opinions on advertising in general and on specific adverts they liked or loathed.

Card D: Das Kino im Wohnzimmer

This was probably the most popular card and successfully handled by most students even if many seemed to refer to watching films on TV or computer rather than on a large *Heimkino* screen. Question 4 about the importance of modern technology could often have been answered in more detail. Few students mentioned films they had seen where computer technology played an essential role. Surprisingly many students overlooked or misinterpreted the question word *Wo?* in

the last question and talked about films they liked. - In most tests, the discussion consisted mainly of standard questions for this sub-topic i.e. frequency of cinema visits, prices, favourite films and actors.

Card E: Streit zu Hause

Most students who chose this card dealt with it well although the majority could have made better use of the speech bubbles on the card; only few students gave a wider range of reasons for family conflicts when answering the second question. Question 3 may have been slightly challenging but most students were able to express their views as to why and when parents should be strict. Discussions usually centred on wider aspects of family relationships but more attempts could have been made by many teacher-examiners to explore and develop the theme of the card itself in more depth.

Card F: Fernsehen für Kinder

This was a less popular choice and often not done as well as expected. Many students did not make enough use of the prompts on the stimulus which could have been helpful in formulating developed answers. The names of the programmes were often quoted but the information underneath about the value of these programmes was ignored too often. While surprisingly few students mentioned relevant aspects like *Gewalt, Werbung, ungeeignete Sendungen* (Question 3), there were many lucid responses about parents' responsibility.

Part 2: Conversation

The timing of the three conversation topics was usually well handled by teacher-examiners although in a few schools the nominated topic lasted for close to 5 minutes leaving inadequate time for the remaining topics. Teachers are reminded that each topic should be discussed for 3-3½ minutes.

It is still a practice followed at some schools conducting their own tests that students prepare long monologues on their nominated topic, often with over-complicated language which some students struggle to remember accurately. Furthermore, it is common among teacher-examiners to go through all the bullet points on the prompt card without developing students' answers through additional questions. On the other hand, markers were pleased to notice that fewer teachers now feel the need to cover all sub-topics in the remaining conversation topics. Teachers are reminded that across their cohort of students the whole range of sub-topics must be discussed; a few teachers seemed to avoid certain sub-topics.

Visiting examiners stated that the majority of students were a pleasure to examine and that less able students were often rising to the occasion demonstrating their readiness and ability to communicate on a variety of topics with good fluency. As in previous years very low fluency marks were rare as were marks below 5 for interaction. One pre-condition for appropriate responses is of course that questions are understood. Some examiners observed that quite a few students had problems with essential question words such as *Was für ein...? Worüber...? Womit? Mit wem?*, sometimes even confusing *wo?* and *wer?* Common questions in the past tense like *Waren Sie schon einmal in... / Sind sie schon.....gewesen? / Hat es Ihnen gefallen?* were also often not understood.

The quality of pronunciation was generally considered to be good or satisfactory so that communication was hardly ever severely affected by faulty pronunciation. Many students made a real effort to produce authentic German vowels and consonants although common weaknesses remained with *ch*, *z* and *v*, *Umlaut* pronunciation (*Übergewicht*), some diphthongs (particularly *waal* for *weil*) and *ei* versus *ie*. Some students consistently pronounced words ending in *e* with an emphasised *ä* (*Leutä*) and few students seemed to be aware that German *ng* in words like *verbringen*, *Sendungen* are pronounced softly rather than with a hard 'g'. Common

mispronunciations of individual words were once again *Familie* (as *Famili*), *DVD* (English version), *Technologie* (sometimes also with *sch* for *g*), *Fettlebigkeit*, *doof* (with *u*), *Elten* for *Eltern*, *Jungenlichen*.

Knowledge of Grammar

Most students achieved marks in the middle bands ranging from 7 to 12. Much less able performances were rarely encountered but there were also comparatively few students whose consistently accurate handling of a variety of structures and vocabulary deserved marks in the top band. However, most students made some attempts to go beyond simple language and to use more ambitious grammar and lexis.

Many students had worked hard at correct syntax in main and subordinate clauses and successfully handled subject/verb inversion as well as common *dass* -, *wenn*- and *weil*- clauses. However, many students still place the verb at the end after *und*, *aber* and *also* (*also das sehr gut ist; aber ich das nicht mag*).

As in previous years, examiners noticed a widespread weakness with verb conjugation. Some students hardly ever attempted correct 3rd person endings and even elementary forms of *haben* and *sein* were often not produced correctly; conjugating *wissen*, *helfen*, *nehmen*, *fahren*, *wollen*, *mögen*, *können* was a frequent problem. Many errors occurred with modal verb structures, e.g. *sie wollen das zu machen; es muss lustig sind* and the use of infinitive clauses was often insecure (*es ist wichtig zu respektiert; es ist gut zu haben Freunde*). There were some students who never added an adjective ending when necessary and common past participles were often not familiar enough. Very few students used the appropriate present tense after *seit* (*Seit 10 Jahren habe ich Klavier gespielt*).

Most students had a sufficient stock of vocabulary at their disposal to deal with all the topics. Occasionally, some students were too keen to use whenever possible sophisticated phrases that are more appropriate in written rather than spoken language – prime examples being *Es besteht kein Zweifel/es lässt sich nicht leugnen/ich bin fest davon überzeugt*. On the other hand, useful adverbs such as *leider*, *glücklicherweise*, *bestimmt*, *unbedingt* were seldom used. Many students started a lot of sentences with *ich denke.....* instead of using the more appropriate *ich glaube*.

Most common errors with vocabulary included:

- *das Fern/im Fern* for *Fernsehen*
- *herunterladen* not used as a separable verb
- *pausen* for *stoppen, anhalten*
- *kontrollen* for *kontrollieren*
- *seriös* for *ernst*
- *Sporten* for *Sportarten*
- *nicht ein* for *kein*
- *es ist süchtig* for *es macht süchtig*
- *nur* for *einzig* (*meine nur Schwester*)
- *in meiner Meinung*
- *meiner Meinung nach ist, dass.....*

There was frequent confusion between:

- *dürfen/erlauben*
- *spenden/verbringen/ausgeben*
- *jemand/jeder*
- *entspannt/Entspannung/entspannend*
- *Übergewicht/übergewichtig*

- *werden/bekommen*
- *entspannend/entspannt/Entspannung*

Fewer students than in previous years mixed up *gesund* and *Gesundheit* and the inappropriate term *Diät* instead of *Ernährung* also featured less often than previously.

Finally, it should be stressed again that despite the critical points mentioned in this report most examiners commented favourably not only on the thorough preparation done by most students but also on the obvious enthusiasm with which many students approach their study of the German language.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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