

PRESENTATIONAL SPEAKING: CULTURAL COMPARISON

Description

The objective of the presentational speaking part of the exam is to evaluate how well you can present your knowledge of the similarities and differences between the practices, products, and perspectives of Spanish-speaking cultures and of your own culture. You will be given a series of instructions and then a question that you are to answer in the form of a presentation. The instructions will be provided both in English and in Spanish, and will inform you that you have to answer the question by comparing your own community with an area of the Spanish-speaking world. You will then have 4 minutes to prepare your presentation and 2 minutes to record it.

The question will be about any topic relating to the six curricular themes. The question itself will be relatively general in nature, meaning that there are many possible ways to answer it, depending on the nature of the cultures being compared. There is no one correct way to answer the question, but you do have to have a prior knowledge of the practices, products, and/or perspectives of at least one area of the Spanish-speaking world and compare them to those of your own community. The speech sample is one you would provide in an academic setting, such as a presentation to your class or to a group of people. It will require you to be well organized, give strong supporting details and relevant examples, and use good vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to ensure that your presentation is fully comprehensible to the target audience.

Recommendations

Cultural knowledge is vital in preparing the questions and in the intended responses. You need to pull knowledge from a wide variety of sources, including materials you may have read, conversations with native speakers, programs on television, radio, and Internet, and any experiences you may have had first-hand. The best way to be prepared to talk about the possible topics is by exposing yourself to as much culture from the Spanish-speaking world as possible.

Both content and language count in the evaluation of this skill area. You need to be able to make clear comparisons and provide relevant examples, organize your presentation in a way that it is clear and coherent to your audience, and use proper grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to communicate your ideas.

When you prepare to take this part of the exam, keep in mind the context. Idiomatic language is also a component of the presentations, and any way that you can relate the vocabulary to what you know about the Spanish-speaking world, will be helpful in thinking about possible topics.

Organization

When preparing your oral presentation, you need to consider organization and flow of ideas. Just like in the Interpersonal Writing: E-mail Reply section, you need to consider how you want to present your information to your audience. Generally speaking, there are three major components to an oral presentation:

- 1. INTRODUCTION.** This is where you greet your audience, inform them of the topic, and explain why this topic is of importance. You want to keep this to no more than 3 to 4 sentences.
- 2. BODY.** This is the most important part of your presentation. This is where you develop your ideas and give supporting details and evidence. A good idea is to provide one example from one of the two cultures, talk about it briefly, and then compare it with one from the other culture. There is no minimum number of examples that you are asked to provide on each topic.
- 3. CONCLUSION.** Here is where you 1) summarize the ideas you presented in the body, 2) make a general statement or give a personal reaction about the topic, and 3) give an appropriate goodbye. Your statement or reaction is what you want to leave with your audience, and it can take the form of a wish, hope or desire (great way to include the use of the subjunctive), or a rhetorical question. What you don't want to do is introduce a new idea in your conclusion.

It is quite difficult to give a detailed oral presentation in two minutes, and most students will not be able to finish their presentation within the allotted time. This does not mean, however, that your goal should be not to finish, but rather it should be to give the strongest presentation you can, regardless of whether or not you finish it in two minutes. On the other hand you want to avoid finishing your oral presentation before two minutes, because more often than not your presentation will not be as developed as it should be.

Use of Transitional Phrases

A key component to any type of presentation is the inclusion of transitional phrases. What follows is a list of transitions that you should learn well.

Uses of transitions	Examples	
To introduce an idea	<i>Para empezar...</i> <i>Primero...</i>	<i>En primer lugar...</i>
To develop ideas	<i>además...</i> <i>a causa de...</i> <i>como consecuencia...</i> <i>como resultado...</i> <i>con respeto a...</i>	<i>en cuanto a...</i> <i>en realidad...</i> <i>por ejemplo...</i> <i>por lo general...</i> <i>también...</i>
To contrast ideas	<i>a pesar de...</i> <i>en cambio...</i> <i>no obstante...</i> <i>no...sino que...</i>	<i>pero...</i> <i>por otro lado...</i> <i>por otra parte...</i> <i>sin embargo...</i>
To connect similar ideas	<i>así que...</i> <i>como resultado...</i> <i>debido a lo anterior...</i> <i>entonces...</i>	<i>por consiguiente...</i> <i>por eso...</i> <i>por esa razón...</i>
To suggest an alternate idea	<i>tal vez...</i> <i>quizás...</i>	<i>a lo mejor...</i> <i>en vez de...</i>
To summarize	<i>como se ha notado</i> <i>finalmente</i>	<i>por fin</i> <i>para concluir</i>

Final Suggestions

Remember your goal is to give a presentation in which you demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a Spanish-speaking community and compare it with your own. In doing so remember the following tips.

- Read the question carefully.
- Think about what you know about the topic and take notes.
- Use the four minutes to think and outline the presentation. Use a mind-map or Venn diagram to help you organize your ideas. Include concrete examples and identify why these are important.
- Do not write out sentences to read. You will not have enough time to write out two minutes worth of presentation, and the reading will be weak.
- Compare the target culture to your own. You don't want to run out of time showing only your knowledge of the target culture. Include how this compares to your own culture.
- Write down key vocabulary you may want to use.
- Write down key transitions you may want to use.
- If you notice that you have made a mistake, correct it. Successful self-correction will only help your score.
- Practice beforehand speaking often about anything for two minutes, so you know how long two minutes is.
- Relax!