

## Introduction to Oral Proficiency Levels Spanish

### Part 1 Module 1.7

**ACTFL Level:** Advanced Low/Mid

**Key Linguistic Feature:** Express (and sometimes support) opinions on abstract issues

## 1. Prepare to Observe

### About the Advanced Low/Mid Speaker

Speakers at this level are relatively fluent and confident, able to talk about a wide range of topics, both personal and impersonal. At the Intermediate level, speakers talk about themselves and about topics in their immediate experience, such as family, school, work, and leisure activities. At the Advanced Low/Mid level, they move beyond these familiar topics to narrate, describe, and explain events in the world around them. For example, they can talk about an event that took place on campus, explaining how it started, what happened, and what is likely to happen in the future.

Advanced Low/Mid speakers have limited ability to talk about abstract and controversial topics that may not affect them directly, such as the social implications of instituting year-round schooling for K–12 students. They tend, however, to view such topics in terms of their own experience. For example, if asked their opinion about a (hypothetical) proposal to raise tuition at public universities in Texas, they almost certainly will talk about the impact on them personally.

Talking about abstract, controversial topics entails stating an opinion, explaining the opinion, and defending the opinion. Strong speakers at the Advanced Mid level on the ACTFL scale typically approach opinion tasks in this way. If they use their own experience as support for their opinion, they return to the abstract topic at the end of their response. Weaker speakers at the Advanced Low level on the ACTFL scale may state their opinion and then tell a story about their personal experience with the topic.

To read full descriptions of the Advanced Low and Advanced Mid levels, see the [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking](#). You can also view video clips of interviews in English at this level.

### Interview Questions

To elicit an opinion on an abstract topic, the interviewer first presents the topic and then asks for the learner's opinion. Sometimes the topic is so well known that it needs no introduction, as with sports. All Advanced Low/Mid-level speakers are able to meet the demands of this task. But to elicit a supported opinion, the interviewer asks additional types of questions. The follow-up question pushes learners to expand on and justify their opinions.

Introducing a different perspective (e.g., *Pero otras personas dicen que...*) or pointing out a lapse in logic by the learner (e.g., *Pero vas a los partidos...* to a student who has criticized the huge allocation of resources to the university football program) forces the learners to support

their opinions. For strong speakers, interviewers may ask a hypothetical question so that the speaker goes farther into the abstract topic and imagines the impact of a course of action that does not exist.

Appropriate question types for speakers at the Advanced Low/Mid level include the following:

- Introduce the controversial topic (if needed) and request the opinion: *¿Qué opinas de la importancia que se le da a los deportes en esta universidad?*
- Follow-up question to elicit expansion of the opinion: *¿Es justificado gastar tanto dinero?*
- Offer an opposing position: *Pero dices que vas a todos los partidos.*
- Hypothetical question: *Si tuvieras doscientos mil dólares para gastar en algo en la universidad, ¿qué harías con esta plata?*

### What to Expect

Advanced Low/Mid-level speakers can state opinions and expand on their opinions. Strong speakers (who would be rated higher than Advanced Mid on the ACTFL scale) can support their opinions when confronted with an opposing point of view. Advanced Low/Mid speakers tend to offer articulate opinion statements, but do not support their opinions as fluently as their original statements. As you watch the two video clips, focus on both how speakers express their opinions and on whether the interviewers ask questions that push the speakers to support their opinions.

## 2. Watch the Interviews

There are two video interviews in this module, and you will be watching each interview twice. In the first interview, Abigail gives her opinion about the money spent on sports at her university. You will see that she also supports her opinion.

In the first viewing of Abigail’s interview, focus on the interview questions, which are provided in the table below, and complete the column about question type.

### Interview: Abigail (topic - sports)

In the second viewing, focus on Abigail’s responses and write your notes in the third column.

Interview Questions	Question Type	Features of Response
1. <i>Qué opinas de la importancia a que se le da a los deportes aquí en la universidad? ¿Tú crees que es necesario mantener un equipo de fútbol, béisbol, básquetbol aquí? porque gastamos mucho dinero.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Opposing perspective <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothetical	
2. <i>Entonces no vale la pena tanto tener...</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up	

	<input type="checkbox"/> Opposing perspective <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothetical	
3. <i>Pero tú dices que vas siempre a los partidos.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Opposing perspective <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothetical	
4. <i>Si tú tuvieras doscientos mil dólares para gastar en algo en la universidad, ¿qué harías con esta plata?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Opposing perspective <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothetical	

In the next interview, Amy gives her opinion about the money spent on sports at her university. You will see that she also supports her opinion. In the first viewing, focus on the interview questions, which are provided in the table below, and complete the column about question type.

### Interview: Amy (topic - sports)

In the second viewing, focus on Amy's responses and write your notes in the third column.

<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Question Type</b>	<b>Features of Response</b>
1. <i>¿Qué opinas de la importancia que se le da a los deportes en esta universidad?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Opposing perspective <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothetical	
2. <i>¿Crees que es justificado gastar tanto dinero en los equipos?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Opposing perspective <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothetical	

## 3. Analyze Speaker Performance

### Review of the Advanced Low/Mid Speaker

Speakers at the Advanced Low/Mid level are quite fluent. They are able to express their opinions and to expand on those opinions when asked to do or when presented with an opposing viewpoint. They do, however, tend to discuss abstract issues in terms of their own experience, which may lead them to make the abstract issue concrete. Strong speakers will use these personal references as illustrative examples to support their opinions on the issue. Weaker speakers tend to make the personal anecdotes the centerpiece of their responses. The role of the interviewer in supported opinion tasks is to frame the issue clearly and then to ask questions in order to determine the extent to which the speaker is able to support their stance on the topic abstractly and logically.

### Questions for Analysis and Discussion

Refer to the descriptions of the Advanced Low/Mid level provided at the beginning of this module and to the notes you took while watching the video clips. Consider these questions on your own or discuss them with a small group.

1. Listen again to Abigail's response. What is her opinion on the topic? What does she say to support her opinion? Does she repeat her opinion, or does she build on it? Refer to Abigail's speech sample in your answer.
2. How does Abigail respond to the interviewer's hypothetical question of how she would spend a large amount of money on behalf of the university? Does she respond in the same hypothetical (conditional) mode? What does Abigail's approach tell you about her proficiency level?
3. Listen again to Amy's response. What is her opinion on the topic? What does she say to support her opinion? Does she repeat her opinion, or does she build on it? Refer to Amy's speech sample in your answer.
4. The two interviewers in these video clips do not open the topic and pose their first request for an opinion in the same way. How do their approaches differ? How do the different formulations affect the responses of the two learners?