

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

Key messages

For candidates:

- the interests of the candidate should play a part in the choice of the subject for the presentation, and clear reference should be made to Hispanic culture or society;
- it is important to structure the presentation to fit into the allowed 3½ minutes, and to express not only facts, but ideas and opinions;
- candidates should focus on the questions asked of them and make sure they answer what is asked;
- candidates should remember that they are expected to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections.

For Examiners:

- the test consists of three distinct sections: **(i)** a Presentation on a topic of the candidate's choice lasting up to 3½ minutes; **(ii)** Topic Conversation (7–8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation; **(iii)** General Conversation (8–9 minutes) on themes which are different from those raised in the Topic Conversation;
- each section should be clearly identified on the recordings, and the prescribed timings observed;
- candidates should be reminded when necessary to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections;
- interaction with the Examiner is an important criterion in both conversation sections.

General comments

Most Centres conducted the tests in full accordance with the requirements of the syllabus and this ensured that candidates had every opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.

The majority of candidates had been well prepared for the examination. They were interested in the topics they had chosen and were happy to speak for the required time.

Most candidates had sufficient information to respond to questions in the Topic Conversation. Candidates were generally ready to ask the Examiner questions but occasionally needed prompting to ask a second question. Most managed to offer ideas and opinions. Sometimes the questions asked, however, were rather general and of tenuous relevance to the issue actually being discussed.

The General Conversation section frequently proved more challenging, owing to the unseen nature of topics that can arise. Most candidates rose to this challenge fairly readily, though some were less forthcoming or more hesitant in this section. Most candidates remembered to ask the Examiner at least one question. In some cases, however, candidates were not always given the chance to speak at a sufficiently advanced level: some of the issues raised in the General Conversation focused on the descriptive and did not provide enough scope for the discussion and probing of ideas.

There was considerable variation in the quality of language. On one hand, accuracy was very good and candidates showed their willingness and ability to handle an advanced range of structures and vocabulary. On the other hand, some weaker candidates were hampered by faulty syntax and a lack of basic vocabulary.

Pronunciation was somewhat variable, but was generally acceptable. Problems with some more difficult sounds occasionally impeded ready communication. Over-reliance on pre-prepared material sometimes led to flat or inaccurate intonation and stressing. Nevertheless, many candidates made real efforts with their pronunciation and intonation and sounded authentic for most or all of the time.

Most Centres recorded the tests on CDs, with clear sound quality. We again remind all Centres to announce the Centre number and candidate name and number at the start of each test. The test of each candidate should be saved as a separate track or file.

It is important that the working mark sheets are fully completed for **all** candidates – including those whose test may not have been submitted as part of the sample – and enclosed with the recording. Please ensure that samples submitted reflect the whole of the candidate range. A few Centres did not complete all the appropriate columns, and gave overall totals only. Marks cannot be confirmed or moderated unless the full breakdown of marks is shown.

There continue to be some Centres that do not make a clear distinction between the Topic and General Conversations. In some cases, candidates had insufficient opportunity to discuss a range of issues. Marks cannot be accepted for a General Conversation if it has clearly not been conducted.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1: Presentation

Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture. It is important that candidates make this explicit in the Presentation. The content mark out of ten is halved if no Hispanic focus was included. Guidance on topic areas may be found in the syllabus.

Presentations should be a formal and coherent introduction to the subject: pronunciation and clarity of delivery are assessed. It is important to show evidence of preparation, organisation and relevant factual knowledge. Presentations ideally provide a personal overview of the issue to lead to the basis of a debate in the Topic Conversation. Candidates who made little attempt to sustain the Examiner's interest lost some credit here.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

This part of the test should not just be an invitation to the candidate to give a further series of mini presentations, but provides the opportunity to develop points arising from the Presentation. Interaction is a key criterion. Candidates whose responses were confined to pre-learned answers, with little evidence of spontaneity, could not be awarded high marks for responsiveness. Candidates should actually take part in a discussion, perhaps by justifying or refuting a point of view.

Marks could not be awarded for 'seeking information and opinions' if no questions were asked by the candidate.

Section 3: General Conversation

As this is a separate section from the Topic Conversation, different issues should be discussed. Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, topics covered should be at an appropriate level. Common areas included current affairs, a news item, the arts, sport, the environment, the economy, politics. As long as the topic areas in the syllabus were addressed, almost anything likely to spark a discussion according to the candidate's interests was acceptable.

There were still some cases of questioning at a level more appropriate to IGCSE or O Level. Although some basic, personal or factual questions may be useful to start the discussion, candidates must be given the opportunity to show they can give and justify opinions of more advanced issues, as well as having sufficient general knowledge to substantiate a point. All conversations should go beyond the descriptive. The range of questions asked should allow the candidate to show competence in structures at a suitably advanced level. Without a suitable depth of discussion and level of language, candidates could not access the higher mark ranges.

As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions and be reminded to do so if necessary. Questions should follow naturally in the course of the discussion and be phrased appropriately. Limited, all-purpose or rhetorical questions such as *¿y tú?* or *¿no?* do not gain much credit.

Language

Accuracy and feel for the language are assessed in both Conversation sections. Examiners are reminded to encourage candidates to use as wide a range of language as possible. An appropriate level of vocabulary and structure is required. To gain access to the higher ranges of the mark scheme, candidates needed to show competence in dealing with hypothetical and abstract situations as well as factual or descriptive areas. Accuracy was frequently in evidence in more basic structures, including verb endings and tenses, or noun/adjective/verb agreements.

Teacher Support

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SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
- **Questions 3 and 4:** comprehension of texts. Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words. Direct copying of five or more words from the text will usually invalidate an answer.
- **Question 5(a):** summary of relevant details from both texts in answer to the question set. Introduction, conclusions and vague generalisations are not required. Specific, relevant details attract marks.
- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the format of the examination; presentation of the scripts was generally good and only one or two showed evidence of poor time management. More able candidates showed clear understanding of the two texts on the use of new technology for reading and communication, and many appeared to be well aware of the techniques required in answering specific questions.

Although performance was generally good, a number of candidates might have achieved higher marks if they had followed the rubric in each exercise. Some approached **Question 1** as if it was an exercise in rephrasing the expressions given in their own words; while in **Question 2** there was a tendency to reproduce the phrases from the text in their original form and to insert the bracketed word(s) without any attempt at reworking, often with a completely ungrammatical result e.g. **Question (c)** *cuando voy al librería* or **Question (d)** *regularmente suelen me los envían*.

A few candidates used bullet points to answer **Questions 3 and 4**, thereby restricting their access to the full range of marks for Quality of Language. This year there were, on the whole, fewer instances of candidates copying five or more words from the texts, but where candidates resorted to this they tended to do so in many of their responses, suggesting they had not read the rubric carefully.

In respect of **Question 5**, in part **(a)** words were wasted on lengthy introductions and conclusions to work which was presented either in the form of a generalised summary or as a piece of free writing on the issues raised but without any concrete references to either text. The latter often incorporated personal opinions, at times to such an extent that it was hard to distinguish between parts **(a)** and **(b)**. A few candidates also lost marks by exceeding 160 words for both parts of this question.

Despite these few shortcomings, candidates generally took full advantage of the opportunities offered to show how able they were to meet the different challenges of the various parts of the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This opening question encourages a careful reading of the first text, and doing just this provided many candidates with a good start.

One of the biggest traps to be avoided is, after having successfully identified the section of text which matches the paraphrase in the question, to include non-essential words or omit essential ones. The answer should exactly match the paraphrase in the question. A recommended way for candidates to check that they have exactly the right phrase is to copy out the question before writing their answer beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Answers which were frequently invalidated by omissions or the inclusion of extra words were:

- (a) – omission of *forma en que*.
- (b) – omission of *con*.
- (d) – omission of *tiene*.
- (e) – omission of *revela* or addition of *que* after *revela*.

In (a) a small number of candidates opted incorrectly for *se han lanzado al mercado*.

Question 2

The successful grammatical manipulations required by this question are always one of the more demanding tests in the examination. Again, it is recommended that candidates copy out the phrase from the question on the line above their answer as a means of checking that all elements of the manipulation have been tackled.

- (a) Most candidates identified that they had to use the subjunctive in this structure but not all of them were successful. Any attempts at using an infinitive e.g. *es posible ser indiferencia / indiferente* were incorrect.
- (b) Many candidates found this manipulation challenging. There was a variety of incorrect answers to which there was no distinct pattern, e.g. *...es perdido, si está perdido..., si perdí...* A number of correct answers avoided the subjunctive and used the infinitive structure *en el caso de haber perdido / de ser perdido*.
- (c) As mentioned above, candidates who were unfamiliar with this construction often wrote incorrectly *cuando voy al librería*. Variations on the verb, such as *entrar en, visitar, llegar a*, were accepted as long as the correct manipulation had been made.
- (d) This construction often presented quite a challenge. Incorrect answers often displayed comprehension and/or word order difficulties together with the omission of some elements, e.g. *regularmente me los suelen, suelen enviarlos regularmente, suelen me los envían*.
- (e) This was the least well answered of the manipulations, presenting problems to even the most proficient candidates. There was a widespread tendency to omit *a* before the relative pronoun, the most common incorrect answer being *por los lectores que les gusta...*

Question 3

The text, with the possible exception of the final paragraph, and questions seemed to be generally well understood. Most candidates attempted to include in their answers the number of points sought by the question, with a greater or lesser degree of success. Instances of copying five or more words of text were relatively infrequent.

- (a) This was a fairly straightforward opening question, with many candidates scoring full marks. The contrast between the importance of the message and the format in which it is delivered was usually clearly stated.
- (b) Most candidates mentioned that the devices were more expensive but not all mentioned that it was expensive to replace them which was the point required to score the mark. The majority mentioned the possibility of losing their whole library if the device were lost. Some candidates mixed up *biblioteca* and *librería* when they wanted to express the preference for some readers to look for old books. Most candidates referred to the difficulty of getting certain types of books in electronic format,

although this was sometimes invalidated when it was merely stated that Ricardo liked *un tipo de literatura difícil*.

- (c) This question was answered very well. Where this was not the case, it was usually because, in connection with sending books, the idea of either friends or e-mail was missing.
- (d) There were several instances of copying *las búsquedas de libros pirata* from the text which invalidated the answer. There were some problems with spelling *búsquedas* and candidates wrote *buscadas* or *busques*. Another not uncommon phrase which was copied from the text was *nueve millones de descargas ilegales*, and also in this second point candidates sometimes could not score when they omitted key details, such as the year or the United States in their answers.
- (e) This question was not answered well. The difficulty seemed to arise from not being able to make a distinction between the projected fates of *libros de tapa blanda* and *libros de tapa dura* and answers often referred to *libros de papel* in general. The concept of an *edición de lujo* was often not understood and neither was the reasoning behind it, prompting renderings such as *para los lectores que quieren guardar el libro*.

Question 4

Higher marks were often recorded than in **Question 3**, possibly because candidates related more easily to the subject of this text. There were nevertheless some significant omissions, both of whole parts of answers and certain key words. Where copying from the text was concerned, it seemed to take place in limited instances where the candidates either struggled to find equivalents or where they may have overlooked the importance of supplying their own words. This was noticeable in cases where the language involved was often of a fairly basic nature, e.g. *en Latinoamérica es en Venezuela*. This applied even to better candidates, who elsewhere went to great lengths to paraphrase and find suitable synonyms in very good-quality language.

- (a) Many candidates mentioned that most smart phone users were adolescents, and that they took them to school even though they were banned. A not uncommon 'lift' from the text was *seis de cada diez de (sus usuarios)*, and, even though it did not infringe the five-word rule, attempts to re-phrase *un objeto de culto* with *cultura* or *estatus* were unsuccessful.
- (b) This question was handled very successfully. All answers included *navegar por Internet*, although just a few candidates copied the idea of *formar parte de la nueva red* and missed out the idea of using the chat function on these telephones.
- (c) Not all candidates made it clear that Venezuela had 70% (or more than half) of all the sales in South America in order to make the answer valid. Some candidates cleverly managed to find ways of expressing *duplican* and then negated them by directly copying *las de Brasil y México juntos*. Most candidates successfully mentioned that the price was not an obstacle for teenagers.
- (d) The first two points were generally well covered except that, in the first, *en las tiendas de Miami* was sometimes copied. In terms of use of language, *electrónica* was, as also in **Question 5**, often rendered as *electrónicos*. The third point tended either to be omitted or misunderstood, with *un venezolano* taken to be a generalisation in the sense of referring to *los venezolanos* in general.
- (e) This was generally answered well. Most candidates stated that there were more private users than companies using smart phones in Venezuela, this being the opposite to other countries. Most candidates also mentioned the relationship between social status and owning a smart phone and that some owned a phone without having a contract, just to be able to say that they had one. The reason why many buy the phones also prompted some skilful renderings, such as *compran.....solo para presumir que los tienen*. Common lifts were: *el 65% de los usuarios son particulares* and *muchos individuos no tienen ni contrato ni saldo*.

Question 5

- (a) Although the advice about the technique required to answer this question successfully has been given in previous reports, there were still a number of candidates whose marks here did not reflect their marks for comprehension in the preceding two questions. Therefore, it is worth emphasising this technique again.

Candidates should, in the limited number of words available, give details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks.

Introductions, such as *En el primer texto el impacto en el individuo no es muy evidente ya que las ventajas o desventajas del cambio no afectan la forma de ser del individuo, sino mas bien afectan a la literatura en sí* waste thirty-nine words and score nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. An answer which plunges straight in and gives specific details from the start, for example, *Con los libros electrónicos es más fácil y barato encontrar libros y también compartirlos* will score three marks in its opening sentence. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

As there was a wealth of specific detail to choose from to answer the question, those candidates with the correct technique often scored high marks.

- (b) This was well answered in general. Many candidates provided relevant concrete examples from different walks of life (school, home, work, hospitals) and some interesting opinions about the negative (less social interaction, over-dependency, laziness) and positive (faster communication, making it easier to perform tasks more quickly and easily) aspects of technology.

A small minority of candidates scored zero after having used up their allocation of words in **Question 5(a)**.

Quality of Language

The quality of written Spanish reflected the varying levels of ability. No matter what the level, answers from candidates with a positive approach to the examination were often a pleasure to read.

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SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
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- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

On the whole, candidates seemed well prepared for the examination and, while there was a variety of abilities, all seemed to know the requirements of the paper, with relatively few copying five or more words in **Questions 3 and 4** and most keeping within the word limit in **Question 5**.

More able candidates showed clear understanding of the two texts on population movement, and most appeared to be well aware of the techniques required in answering specific questions. A few candidates used bullet points to answer **Questions 3 and 4**, thereby restricting their access to the full range of marks for Quality of Language. Presentation of the scripts was generally good, and only one or two candidates seemed pressed for time.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This opening question encourages a careful reading of the first text, and doing just this provided many candidates with a good start.

One of the biggest traps to be avoided is, after having successfully identified the section of text which matches the paraphrase in the question, to include non-essential words or omit essential ones. The answer should exactly match the paraphrase in the question. A recommended way for candidates to check that they have exactly the right phrase is to copy out the question before writing their answer beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Two answers which were frequently invalidated by the inclusion of extra words were:

(d) – prefaced with *están*.

(e) – prefaced with *no quieren que*.

In (b) a small number of candidates opted incorrectly for *ha visto una clara tendencia*.

Question 2

The successful grammatical manipulations required by this question are always one of the more demanding tests in the examination. Again, it is recommended that candidates copy out the phrase from the question in the line above their answer as a means of checking that all elements of the manipulation have been tackled.

- (a) Equivalence between *ya no* and *dejar de* appeared to be well known, and many correct answers were recorded. A number of candidates added *tan* to their answers, giving *ya no es tan fácil*, which worked well.
- (b) The use of *llevar* in temporal constructions is often difficult to master. Several candidates began the phrase correctly, but were unsuccessful in the second part through offering *no viendo* or *sin viendo* when *sin ver* was required.
- (c) Many candidates correctly made the association between *de nuevo* and *volver a*. Other candidates did not see beyond the basic meaning of *volver*, and were unable to supply a phrase to fit back into the text with the same meaning.
- (d) This should have been a fairly straightforward manipulation but many candidates invalidated an otherwise correct answer by omitting *que* at the beginning of their answer. (The answer must be able to fit into the text with exactly the same meaning as the original phrase). A number of candidates realised that the manipulation could be made without either *que* or *está* and correctly began the answer with *relacionada*.
- (e) This was a clear case of how copying the phrase from the question before attempting the manipulation might have helped. Although a number of correct variations were possible, all required *los* and *por el paro* – either of which were frequently omitted.

Question 3

The text and questions seemed to be generally well understood. Most candidates attempted to include in their answers the number of points sought by the question, with a greater or lesser degree of success. Instances of copying five or more words of text were relatively infrequent.

- (a) This was a fairly straightforward opening question, with many candidates scoring full marks. The vast majority of candidates mentioned that Fernando's age made him eligible, although the other points were sometimes missed by confusing his previous work with what he was doing now.
- (b) There were four possible routes to scoring three marks and many candidates found at least two of them. The final point about working the land to help domestic finances needed to mention that this was done in people's spare time to get the mark.
- (c) Candidates often found difficulty in successfully communicating the first point – that the mayor was now seeing people back in the village who used to live there. The other two points were accessible to most.
- (d) Many candidates were able to note both points about the illegal tractors, (lack of paperwork and lack of insurance), and the majority scored at least one mark. Some candidates focused on other points in the paragraph which were not relevant to the question. A few candidates missed out on a mark by copying *no quieren pagar el seguro obligatorio* directly from the text.
- (e) This question was answered well. Many candidates noted the points that the over 50s were flocking back to the country, and that they were the ones who were suffering most from unemployment. Although the point that young people were also returning because of the collapse in the property market was often noted, the fact that these were the ones who had abandoned agriculture to work in the construction boom was sometimes overlooked.

Question 4

There was a similar pattern of outcomes to that of the previous question and the two comprehension questions appeared to offer a comparable level of challenge.

- (a) Many candidates readily identified all three points required by the mark scheme although there were a few instances of copying *en lugares cada vez más deshumanizados* from the text which meant that the mark could not be awarded.
- (b) Most candidates were able to pick out *la igualdad social* from the text to score the first mark. A good number of candidates were also able to develop this successfully by adding that in the cities people from different classes mingled with one another.
- (c) Teasing out the meaning of the third paragraph proved a little more difficult, although marks were perhaps lost through inattention to detail rather than lack of comprehension. The point about people moving from the centre to the outskirts or outside the city was sometimes missed, and also the fact that they were seeking accommodation which was not only bigger but also cheaper.
- (d) Again marks were sometimes missed by not including relevant details. It was necessary to say that pollution was caused by daily or constant travel, and that this made demands upon energy resources which were unsustainable.
- (e) Most candidates scored marks, but not so many managed to convey all four answers. The point about the rediscovery of parts of the city that were previously covered by advertisements and the one referring to the dilapidated state of the buildings that were painted in Tirana, were the most commonly omitted.

Question 5

- (a) Although the advice about the technique required to answer this question successfully has been given in previous reports, there were still a number of candidates whose marks here did not reflect their marks for comprehension in the preceding two questions. Therefore, it is worth emphasising this technique again.

Candidates should, in the limited number of words available, give details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks.

Introductions, such as *En el primer texto nos habla de qué pasó con las personas que no pudieron adaptar a ser acomodadas en ciudades urbanas. En el segundo texto podemos ver que las personas que sí son acomodadas exigieron más y está afectando a todos en la ciudad* waste forty-five words and score nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

As there was a wealth of specific detail to choose from to answer the question, those candidates with the correct technique often scored high marks.

- (b) Candidates who answered this part of the question and gave opinions on the quality of life in cities where they live were able to access the higher mark bands. A number of candidates wrote about the quality of life in their country in general, and scored zero or just one mark for not really answering the question. A small minority of candidates also scored zero after having used up their allocation of words in **Question 5(a)**.

Quality of Language

The quality of written Spanish was frequently of a high level and answers were often a pleasure to read.

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SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable;
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated, coherently structured and well informed;
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate topic-related vocabulary;
- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

A very wide range of ability was seen in answers on this paper. There were many intelligently written, well-structured, easy-to-read essays which articulated relevant, well-conceived ideas in response to the title set. There was plenty of evidence of mature essay writing with much effort to produce an attractive, convincing style thereby resulting in successful outcomes. Equally, a number of less successful essays struggled to stay focused on the title and tended to rely heavily on pre-learnt material relating more to the topic in very general terms as opposed to the specific angle required by the actual title on the paper. This type of approach, together with an insecure grasp of Spanish grammar and an idiomatic lack of elegance, more often than not leads to less impressive outcomes.

Most, but not all candidates followed the rubric concerning the number of words to be used. As a direct consequence, their essays retained a clear line of thought and were convincing in their argument. However, some essays were surprisingly short of the 250-word minimum stipulated in the rubric. Inevitably, such pieces will not gain access to the higher marks both in terms of structure and language. It is almost always the case that such very short essays are poorly structured and are often very limited in their response to the actual title set.

In terms of the language used in essays, the overall quality of Spanish was sometimes very good indeed. A number of essays showed a confident manipulation of sentence structure together with a well-researched range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic being discussed. Many candidates showed a self-assured ability to manipulate advanced sentence structure and to employ a good range of appropriate vocabulary in order to put across to the reader a clear line of thought. In some essays where the final mark awarded was 'satisfactory', it was sometimes the case that very simple errors had been made, perhaps because the essay had not been checked either because of a lack of time or misplaced confidence. It is essential, therefore, that candidates leave enough time at the end of the examination to allow a thorough check of what they have written.

Candidates are well advised to read all the questions very carefully as soon as the examination begins and, after a few moments of thought, to respond to the actual title selected and not merely the topic area in general. Ideas loosely based on a vague and largely generalised approach to the topic title rather than the actual question set will not score highly. How candidates decide to respond to their chosen title is entirely up to them, but keeping the title in mind as they write is crucial to success in this paper.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- clear understanding with regard to the use of tenses, in particular the differences between the imperfect and the preterite tenses;
- the judicious use of expressions designed to enhance structure (e.g. *en primer lugar, por otra parte, no se necesita dudar que, no obstante*);

- the liberal use of connectives in order to lengthen sentences and give them more complexity whilst not sacrificing clarity;
- total understanding of the theory and practice of adjectival agreement in Spanish and few problems with the use of singular and plural verbs as and when appropriate;
- an ability to inject essays with a degree of linguistic flair associated with more complex constructions (e.g. *si tuviese más tiempo, ofrecería más detalle, nadie puede negar que, es imprescindible considerar los dos lados del debate*);
- avoiding interference from English sentence structures;
- being able to use Spanish accents accurately and consistently.

Common errors included:

- confusion between the use of the indicative and the subjunctive;
- misunderstanding of the differences between *hay* and *es/tiene*;
- adjectives of nationality being written with a capital letter;
- dropping the letter 'h' when using the perfect tense (e.g. *la gente a entendido el problema*);
- basic spelling errors such as *la jente, es importante alludar a los pobres* and *la gente nesesita*;
- the use of the verb *estar* in passive sentences (e.g. *el chocolate está comido por muchos niños*);
- the use of *gustar* with the reflexive pronoun (e.g. *Se gusta el chocolate*);
- the use of plural verbs with *la gente*;
- ending sentences with a preposition (e.g. *las personas tengo que trabajar con.*);
- omitting the letter 'e' from a number of infinitives (e.g. *studiar* and *scribir*).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A very popular title with candidates. The biological necessity of food was self-evident but every single essay written on this subject went on to argue that food can be one of life's great pleasures. There was much sympathy and, indeed, considerable anger expressed at the fact that many people go hungry on a daily basis, especially in the less economically developed countries. Some essays argued passionately that the amount of food wasted on a regular basis in many wealthy countries is an absolute scandal and that if all countries worked together more, there would be less hunger and far less malnutrition.

Question 2

The small number of candidates who responded to this title produced convincing essays that were easy to read and well developed in terms of understanding of the actual title. Most argued that the wealthier countries on the planet should have some sense of responsibility with regard to the poorer ones. World poverty should be an urgent issue for many developed nations and, understandably, candidates felt that more could be done by all countries to support those most in need. Some essays, however, simply accepted the existence of poor countries as an inevitable consequence of globalisation.

Question 3

Another popular title with candidates. Responses were very much in favour of travelling abroad as a way of increasing mutual understanding between different peoples. The current economic crisis was considered by many candidates to be a hindrance with regard to such travel but most were optimistic for the future and actively encouraged the desirability of foreign travel. Many essays praised the attractions, both geographical and cultural, of their own countries but still concluded that travel abroad can only be a positive experience.

Question 4

A very popular title with candidates. Many candidates felt that their own generation does indeed fail to show sufficient respect for their elders. Candidates drew on plenty of their own personal experiences. Most agreed that seeking advice from parents and grandparents is always a good thing to do although in a number of essays candidates felt that the quality of the advice offered is sometimes lacking.

Question 5

Responses to this title were rare. Most essays agreed, however, that women are regrettably still having to battle for equal rights in the workplace and all essays agreed that such sexual discrimination was unfair and needed to become a thing of the past. Some essays suggested that if the world were governed exclusively by women, then it would be a better place for all. The physical and emotional differences between the two sexes were examined and most concluded that mutual respect was essential.

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SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable;
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated, coherently structured and well informed;
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate topic-related vocabulary;
- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

A very wide range of ability was seen in answers on this paper. There were many intelligently written, well-structured, easy-to-read essays which articulated relevant, well-conceived ideas in response to the title set. There was plenty of evidence of mature essay writing with much effort to produce an attractive, convincing style thereby resulting in successful outcomes. Equally, a number of less successful essays struggled to stay focused on the title and tended to rely heavily on pre-learnt material relating more to the topic in very general terms as opposed to the specific angle required by the actual title on the paper. This type of approach, together with an insecure grasp of Spanish grammar and an idiomatic lack of elegance, more often than not leads to less impressive outcomes.

Most, but not all candidates followed the rubric concerning the number of words to be used. As a direct consequence, their essays retained a clear line of thought and were convincing in their argument. However, some essays were surprisingly short of the 250-word minimum stipulated in the rubric. Inevitably, such pieces will not gain access to the higher marks both in terms of structure and language. It is almost always the case that such very short essays are poorly structured and are often very limited in their response to the actual title set.

In terms of the language used in essays, the overall quality of Spanish was sometimes very good indeed. A number of essays showed a confident manipulation of sentence structure together with a well-researched range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic being discussed. Many candidates showed a self-assured ability to manipulate advanced sentence structure and to employ a good range of appropriate vocabulary in order to put across to the reader a clear line of thought. In some essays where the final mark awarded was 'satisfactory', it was sometimes the case that very simple errors had been made, perhaps because the essay had not been checked either because of a lack of time or misplaced confidence. It is essential, therefore, that candidates leave enough time at the end of the examination to allow a thorough check of what they have written.

Candidates are well advised to read all the questions very carefully as soon as the examination begins and, after a few moments of thought, to respond to the actual title selected and not merely the topic area in general. Ideas loosely based on a vague and largely generalised approach to the topic title rather than the actual question set will not score highly. How candidates decide to respond to their chosen title is entirely up to them, but keeping the title in mind as they write is crucial to success in this paper.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- clear understanding with regard to the use of tenses, in particular the differences between the imperfect and the preterite tenses;
- the judicious use of expressions designed to enhance structure (e.g. *en primer lugar, por otra parte, no se necesita dudar que, no obstante*);

- the liberal use of connectives in order to lengthen sentences and give them more complexity whilst not sacrificing clarity;
- total understanding of the theory and practice of adjectival agreement in Spanish and few problems with the use of singular and plural verbs as and when appropriate;
- an ability to inject essays with a degree of linguistic flair associated with more complex constructions (e.g. *si tuviese más tiempo, ofrecería más detalle, nadie puede negar que, es imprescindible considerar los dos lados del debate*);
- avoiding interference from English sentence structures;
- being able to use Spanish accents accurately and consistently.

Common errors included:

- confusion between the use of the indicative and the subjunctive;
- misunderstanding of the differences between *hay* and *es/tiene*;
- adjectives of nationality being written with a capital letter;
- dropping the letter 'h' when using the perfect tense (e.g. *la gente a entendido el problema*);
- basic spelling errors such as *la jente, es importante alludar a los pobres* and *la gente nesesita*;
- the use of the verb *estar* in passive sentences (e.g. *el chocolate está comido por muchos niños*);
- the use of *gustar* with the reflexive pronoun (e.g. *Se gusta el chocolate*);
- the use of plural verbs with *la gente*;
- ending sentences with a preposition (e.g. *las personas tengo que trabajar con.*);
- omitting the letter 'e' from a number of infinitives (e.g. *studiar* and *scribir*).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A very popular title with candidates. Many responses showed plenty of understanding of the problems associated with obesity in our contemporary society. Most agreed that there is a clear connection between fast food and obesity but also that personal discipline has a part to play. All agreed that the wide availability of fast food outlets was also a contributory factor. A number of essays argued passionately that governments around the world should restrict the amount of advertising of fast food aimed deliberately at the younger generation.

Question 2

The small number of candidates who responded to this title produced very convincing essays that were easy to read and well developed in terms of understanding of the actual title. Most felt that world poverty is a real issue for many developed nations but, understandably, candidates felt that more could be done by all countries to support those most in need. Some degree of shame was expressed by candidates that the wealthier nations talk a great deal about eradicating poverty but appear to do little to bring it about.

Question 3

Another popular title with candidates. Responses were generally good and unanimously concluded that staying on home territory is indeed preferable to, and more relaxing than, travelling abroad, especially in the current economic climate. Many essays examined both sides of the argument and went on to praise travel abroad as well as domestic travel. The most common conclusion accepted that it is easier and safer to stay at home but that travelling abroad can help to broaden the horizons of the individual.

Question 4

A very popular title with candidates. The main conclusion reached by almost all who responded was that there is indeed a compelling need to learn from the mistakes made by previous generations. Many argued that the consequences of failing to do so are well documented in history. The importance of making one's own mistakes and learning from them in general terms was clearly emphasised alongside this.

Question 5

Responses to this title were rare. The essays that were produced, nevertheless, tended to argue that age discrimination in all its forms is very much an unfortunate part of modern life. Such discrimination should, however, be challenged by us all every time it is encountered, and many essays went on to argue the case for even more transparent legislation to tackle such discrimination. No essays took the view that age discrimination is a positive aspect of modern society.

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