

Report on the Units

June 2006

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All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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2671: GCE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY SPANISH (SPEAKING)

General Comments

The speaking tests were generally conducted in accordance with the regulations and specifications. The examiners and moderators are conscious of the time and efforts of all those concerned with the examination in centres and thank these colleagues for their assistance in ensuring the tests and assessment proceed as smoothly as possible.

Those problems that did occur were mainly administrative issues and have been identified in previous reports. The majority of centres dispatched their tapes promptly and with the required documentation. Nevertheless, teacher examiners and administrators are referred to the booklet CW1242, *Instructions for Internally Conducted Oral Examinations*. We summarise below some of the points that caused disproportionate inconvenience and difficulties.

The examiners and moderators need to receive with the tapes from all centres conducting their own tests individual candidate mark sheets duly headed AND the candidate topic forms. Candidates' names and numbers should be written on the cassette box, as well as being announced on the tape. Please note that tapes should be sent as soon as the tests have been completed and not held back until the final test date.

Please remember that, once the test has started, tapes must not be stopped, even between sections. It is important and in the candidate's own interest to adhere to the prescribed timings for the different sections of the test and to the randomisation order of the role plays as printed in the examiner's booklet.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1 Candidates generally responded well to the requirements of the role plays. All the options provided sufficient scope for development according to the ability of individual candidates and all offered comparable challenges and opportunities for an appropriate range of language and response at this level.

Candidates, for the most part, appeared to have used their preparation time well and to have considered their responses to the factual information on the stimulus sheets. Better candidates managed to think out strategies to develop the material and to fulfil their part as provider or seller of the information as a role play rather than a comprehension exercise.

The nature of the participation by the teacher/examiner is key in the candidate's ability to meet the full range of criteria in the mark schemes – a judicious balance of questioning without saying too much yet facilitating interaction. Teachers were increasingly aware of the need to probe the information given by the candidate and to request clarification as appropriate to their specific needs or situation. The focus on grids 1A and 1B of the mark scheme is *relevant* information and response as outlined in the task and situation set. Candidates gain credit not just for the factual content of the information they give, or the length of their response, but for the manner and relevance of their response to the task fulfilment. A pleasing number of candidates – at various levels of linguistic competence – made real effort to show initiative and simulation of the role in the exchanges.

Language is assessed by reference to grid 1C. As previously, linguistic shortcomings for the most part remained essentially basic grammar, structure and vocabulary, irrespective of the role play option (or section of the test).

Although candidates ask the initial questions when invited without too much difficulty, only a comparative minority are comfortable in framing these with appropriate syntax and have apparent difficulty in constructing natural questions with question words such as *¿cuánto/s?; ¿dónde? ¿desde cuándo?/¿cuánto tiempo hace que...?* , and so on. Some practice with these by now somewhat predictable types of initial questions could help future candidates.

- 1) (a) Role play A was concerned with safety on the beach. Although the stimulus material covered issues such as warnings and what to do in an emergency, the task additionally specified *convencerle de que será posible nadar sin peligro*. Weaker candidates tended to list the problems and dangers, better candidates were able to get across the idea that swimming is safe *so long as* A number of candidates omitted the advice not to swim alone.

As usual, candidates could get some help with essential vocabulary by reference to the candidate sheet itself: *barcos de rescate, peligro, bandera, ayuda*, etc. A high proportion of candidates provided successful ways of suggesting the concept of *lifeguard* or summoning help. Most candidates referred to the importance of the flags, though, surprisingly, colours were sometimes a problem. Examiners lost count (no pun intended) however of the number of candidates (including some more able ones) who expressed 999 as *nuevo, nuevo, nuevo*. Other figures, quantities met with varying success – ‘fifty miles’ frequently became *cincuenta* (occasionally *quince*) *miles*; ‘signs’ were commonly *signos*; *peligro* was sometimes treated as an adjective. ‘24-hour service’ became *veinticuatro horas servicio*, though *día y noche* was a serviceable and creditable alternative. ‘231 (centres)’ had almost a corresponding number of renderings.

- 1) (b) Role play B, like its focus, digital television, offered something for everyone. This universality of appeal was an essential element of the task, *convencerle de que será una opción para toda la familia*. Candidates responded fairly readily to the factual items, such as types of programmes on offer. A discriminator was the idea of ‘not more tv, but the kind of programmes you like to watch, when you want’. Nevertheless, candidates responded well to this option, at least at a superficial level. Most coped well with the extended open questions about television or censorship. There were some rather laboured and unidiomatic phrasings for the opening questions.

Numbers, again, were a stumbling block for a fairly wide range of candidates; 20 was frequently *viente* (sic), and *cien/ciento* uncertain. Just as ‘miles’ always causes problems (as in role play A), so ‘pounds’ as in ‘£13.50 a month’, became *trece/treinta/diecitrés libros una mesa*. Since role play stimulus materials are most likely to come in a UK context, candidates would be well advised to revise some essential UK units ‘Documentaries’ was fairly troublesome.

- 1) (c) Role play C concerned using a mobile phone here and abroad. The initial questions again were frequently framed in an ungainly way but were generally acceptable. The task required the candidate to respond to the client's needs – in this case, not just using a phone for calls but texting. This latter element formed part of the information given by the examiner in a response to an initial question, but was not always fully seized on by the candidate. The open questions on the advantages or not of mobile phones were tackled quite well.

Candidates coped generally well with the idea of using the mobile in various countries, and most conveyed the methods of payment. A point often missed was the fact that within each country all types of calls cost the same.

Numbers were also present in this option: 125 met with varying success; 99% was occasionally *noventa y nueve*. Undoubtedly, the real hurdle was 'pence', though one candidate did a rough-and-ready calculation for 3p as *cinco euros*! Confusion of *mes / mesa* in conveying 'monthly' was fairly common.

Part 2 Topic Presentation

Candidates offered a reasonably wide selection of topics for this part of the test. Football in Spain or Argentina, no doubt through interest in this summer's World Cup, was noticeably more popular as a topic. Weaker candidates listed names of footballers and their teams in a somewhat arbitrary way, but there were also some interesting, informative and well-organised presentations, clearly focused on the Spanish-speaking world with some insight on the overall context. Otherwise, the usual suspects such as *la corrida*, *el turismo*, *la inmigración* etc. were in evidence; *el flamenco* was another popular topic this session. As always, the quality and depth of content varied considerably, with some examples of barely GCSE-ish descriptions of food and holidays in Spain to highly personalised talks on writers, music, art and politics.

One of the strengths of the AS specification is the ability for candidates to select a topic almost without limits, so long as the Spanish-speaking context is clearly the basis. The other side of the coin is that some candidates attempt to deal with a topic that is itself too wide in scope, either academically or linguistically, for their level and experience of the language. Presentations and topics which tended to be more successful were those in which the candidate focused on a specific aspect, possibly posing a question to be answered, such as *toros – barbarie o arte*, or *el impacto del turismo sobre ...*, and allowing the candidate to research and develop opinions and fact on a limited but concentrated area. As has been stated before, in order to meet Assessment Object 4 of the Specification candidates must show both specific knowledge and awareness of the relevant cultural context.

Topic Discussion

The ML Topic Form forms the skeleton for the subsequent discussion. Teachers and examiners have to walk a difficult tightrope and allow candidates the space, time opportunity to show their knowledge and develop their points, yet also to prevent this part of the test becoming a series of mini presentations. Candidates whose fluency was limited to autopilot responses to expected and over-rehearsed questions did not score well for spontaneity, even though their statements were suitably detailed. Candidates' interests were better served when teacher / examiners paraphrased the words on the topic form or came to the nub of those points from a different angle, allowing candidates the opportunity to select the information within the framework specifically relevant to that question. Obviously, the extent to which this is possible depends on the ability and perception of the individual candidate; some weaker candidates had difficulty even in delivering a prepared answer, whereas others were clearly capable of being extended beyond those questions actually asked.

Marks for language covered the entire range of the mark scheme. As might be expected, syntax, vocabulary, phrases etc. specifically prepared with the topic in mind were largely successful. Lapses were mainly in basic structures, essential verb forms and everyday vocabulary.

Pronunciation was generally at least adequate, though mispronunciation of certain words such as *sociedad* is now endemic. Intonation was more mixed: uptalk inflection continues its slow but steady advance but overall the quality of pronunciation is acceptable, with some very good sounds from a high number of candidates.

2672:Spanish Listening, Reading and Writing 1

This year's paper retained the level of accessibility of previous years, and appeared to be a fair assessment, providing a wide range of marks and clearly revealing different levels of ability and knowledge, although the difficulties encountered by the candidates in the later stages tended to demonstrate that it was a slightly harder test than that of the previous year.

That said, the general level of performance was good and most candidates were able to complete the paper, even though there were occasional signs of questions being rushed, and not necessarily at the end. Candidates are obviously being well trained by Centres to enable them to calculate how to allot their time to best advantage.

In the first part of the paper, **Tasks 1, 2 and 3** were completed well on the whole, while **Task 4** seemed somewhat easier than its equivalent in recent years. **Task 5** seemed very fair and most candidates scored well on comprehension. It was in the final section of the paper where candidates experienced the most problems. Although some centres had candidates who were able to score uniformly well on **Tarea 6**, the general standard of performance in this exercise seemed to be a little lower this year. Lesser-experienced candidates often appeared to be completely puzzled by this task, whose linguistic complexity meant that even moderate candidates tended to under-perform. In the overall context, the relatively easier **Tarea 4** did not appear to provide sufficient compensation for this. **Tarea 7**, although demanding, seemed fair and gave candidates the opportunity to use their knowledge and initiative to produce an effective version.

Section 1a

Tarea 1 provided a short and accessible entry into the exam and the overwhelming majority of candidates were able to identify three of the five correct answers. Achieving full marks, however, was much more difficult and only seemed to be within the capacity of the best students. Questions (d) and particularly (e) were the real testers.

Tarea 2 again provided a searching test and a full range of marks, although it turned out to be easier than Tarea 1 and more candidates were able to give five correct answers. The main problem was question (5).

Tarea 3 Although there were very few full marks, many candidates were ably to score reasonably well on this task. Question b) was undoubtedly the one that caused most confusion, followed closely by (f), (g) and (i).

Section 1b

Tarea 4

This reading comprehension was an accessible text, on a subject that most students would have found interesting and within their realm of experience, thereby allowing most candidates to approach it with confidence and do themselves justice. The overall results tended to indicate that the exercise was somewhat easier than its equivalent in previous years' papers, with many scoring highly, although once again, very few were able to achieve the maximum mark. The correct answers that tended to be omitted were (c), (e), (k) and (m) and the most popular incorrect substitutes were (g), (n), (p) and (s).

Section 2a

Tarea 5

There were very few problems with multiple choice questions (a), (b) and (g). Marks were often lost on the other answers either through the inability to express the desired answer or because the appropriate section of the audio text was not correctly identified.

In Question (c), mistakes often centred on the misunderstanding of “no podré servirles” which often became something like “no podres serviles” or “no podréis sirvales”. This confusion of person was often repeated in the whole sentence where it was difficult to find out who was doing what, e.g. “No podía servirles la cantidad de melocotones que ha pedido”. In addition, “pedido” often became “perdido” which unfortunately tended to distort the meaning. Some candidates had the right idea but did not give enough information. Answers such as “por la orden de melocotones”, whilst accurate, do not give enough information to justify a question allocation of three marks.

Questions (d) and (e) showed the inability on the part of a considerable number of candidates to reproduce what had been heard and “reducido” and “reservado” were often not clearly understood.

The final three questions were generally well done, although difficulty in understanding the spoken Spanish led to a number of errors. In (i), for example, “contactarle en seguida” sometimes became “contactarle en Sevilla”, while in (j) “tiene otros clientes esperando” became “tiene tres clientes esperando”.

It was gratifying to see that the standard of written Spanish was reasonably high and most candidates were able to score at least 3 out of the 5 available marks for this aspect of the task.

Tarea 6

This task proved difficult for all but the better candidates, although there were a number of excellent translations and the standard of English was generally good.

The problems began right at the start and many candidates had difficulty identifying the roles of the people involved. The opening statement often revealed their confusion with translations such as “they apologise to them” or “you have to apologise because I do not like treating my old customers like this”. Such difficulties created by the use of pronouns tended to occur at regular intervals throughout the text. Phrases such as “para darles una idea”, for example, were often incorrectly interpreted as “to give them an idea”.

Once again it was evident that some candidates were unacquainted with the significance of the abbreviation Vd., which gave rise to such statements as “The Vd’s will be preoccupied with the other orders”.

Vocabulary proved to be a major stumbling block for many candidates in the first section - “pedidos” (which was often given as “losses”), “temporada”, “me esforzaré”, etc. When in doubt, candidates should not leave alternatives for the examiner to select for them and proposals such as “questions/losses” or “production/crops” were not viewed very positively.

The second paragraph proved more accessible, although many were unaware of the significance of the false friend “actualmente”. The role of the insects was a difficult one for some candidates to grasp, and they were alternatively seen as consumers, products or even producers in such offerings as: “they sell their reduced production to the insects”

“they have actually seen a reduced production of insects”

“they saw that their production was actually reduced for some insects”

“and actually watch the reduced production from the insects”

The introductory phrase to the third paragraph caused significant problems. Candidates found it difficult to give an appropriate fluent interpretation of the impersonal “se” in the expression “se habla de”, which all too often came out as “it speaks of” or “one speaks of”. Such issues highlight the need for candidates to be trained to concentrate on understanding and communication of meaning rather than focus on a literal word for word translation. Similar problems occurred with “se considera que” and the passive construction “se espera una ola de frío”, in which phrase the meaning of “esperar” was often seen as expressing hope rather than expectation.

Tarea 7

This also proved to be a difficult task with considerable demands on candidates’ linguistic knowledge and ability. Writing a letter in one language from notes written in another is always a demanding exercise and requires considerable skill and training. One of the key factors is the mental flexibility needed to consider overall meaning and to be prepared to paraphrase when difficulties present themselves, rather than just adopting a literal word for word approach.

Candidates should have two major buttresses to enable them to cope with this exercise with any degree of success. Firstly, they should make use of material already provided in other parts of the paper. In this case, they should have been able to identify such terms as “consignación”, “cantidad”, “melocotones”, “pedidos”, “dificultades”, etc. which had occurred in Tarea 5 and Tarea 6.

Secondly, they should have a core of linguistic structures that would allow them to respond accurately to a particular stimulus in an elementary business context. Thanking someone for a service, for example, (the ability to use “agradecer” correctly or, at a less advanced level, the use of “gracias” with the correct preposition, seemed to be beyond the ability of many candidates), apologising, expressing regret or appreciation, etc, are all regular demands of this exercise. The use of the subjunctive with such clauses was not widely appreciated, nor was its use with imperatives, such as “contact us again”.

It has to be said, however, that in this particular scenario, candidates were presented with unexpected complications and potential pitfalls. The instruction “tell him that I am sorry that difficulties have arisen for him this year” meant they had to distinguish carefully between apologising and expressing regret. Many attempted to use such phrases as “me disculpa” or “le pido perdón”, which were obviously inappropriate in this context. Similarly, the phrase “I appreciate the way”, which many candidates struggled to convey, demanded a certain flexibility of approach to comprehend ideas of “being glad that” or “thanking for”.

Other structures where practice and training would bear fruit should also include, as ever, the proper use of “gustar” (so many candidates had “gustaríamos” for “we would like”), and the use of “si” with the present indicative (many candidates attempted to use the present subjunctive here and wrote “si piense”).

Personal pronouns are a perennial problem in this exercise. Once again, all too many candidates are using “tú” or “vosotros” with their corresponding verb forms, which is inappropriate in a business context and is severely penalised at this level. In addition, the position of such pronouns also caused particular havoc. A few examples of candidates offerings - “mandaré le los pedidos”, “las dificultades que han afectado le”, “has contactado a me”, “ha informadonos” - should demonstrate the need for more practice in this particular grammatical aspect.

Basic verb forms also require more attention. Particularly noticeable was the inability to use the future tense accurately to translate “we will send” and the past perfect tense for such phrases as “as we have done”.

In terms of vocabulary, certain basic elements of business communication are essential. In this context, it was disappointing to see how few candidates knew how to express “telephone call” for example. In a more general sense, surprisingly few candidates were able to translate “in spite of”, although many used their initiative to circumvent this lack of knowledge.

Nevertheless, there was considerable evidence of good practice, and the better candidates were able to cope with all of these problems, showing extensive linguistic knowledge and considerable initiative in their need to overcome apparent difficulties in phrasing, often with the use of set structures such as “no dude en ponerse en contacto con nosotros”, or “le ruego se ponga en contacto con nosotros”, for example.

AS Spanish Reading and Writing 2673/02

1 General Comments

The paper worked well producing a good spread of marks and with all tasks tackled with a confidence which wasn't always matched by competence. There appeared to be increasing familiarity with the necessary techniques for the different Sections of the exam and once again time management did not appear to be a problem.

Sections A and C discriminated well in determining candidates' linguistic aptitude. Section B demonstrated that it was possible for moderate linguists to achieve good scores if they were able to demonstrate understanding of the stimulus text and generate a thoughtful response to it.

Again this year there was an isolated case of a candidate apparently using a continuation sheet which was nowhere to be found in the script packet. It is to be recommended that Centres ensure that all continuation sheets be securely attached to the candidate's script.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

TAREA 1

This was not such an easy opener as the subject matter might have initially suggested and only the very best candidates managed to score full marks. A fairly typical score was 4/7, with questions (c), (e) and (f) perhaps causing most problems. A few candidates offered two ticks in the same row and scored nil for that particular question.

TAREA 2

Candidates generally fared better on this test with many achieving good or perfect scores. Many came unstuck with question (f), either through missing the *ya* in the question or the relevant reference in the text (end of paragraph 3). Question (g) was the other main stumbling block, with *detenido en el acto* deceiving many.

TAREA 3

Most candidates now appear to be well aware of how answers to this question will be assessed and use this to their advantage. There were many good answers, even from average linguists.

This year there was a slight reversal of the trend in recent examinations with candidates generally achieving lower marks for **Comprehension of Content** than they did for **Reponse**. Although many wrote at great length, they often paid little attention to the instruction *según el texto*, and gave their own ideas of what exactly a *cazafamosos* and his/her job was. What was said was often quite valid but didn't necessarily coincide with the information given in the stimulus. A few candidates totally misinterpreted the word, despite the explanation in the title and description in the text, taking it to refer to the celebrities themselves or their bodyguards.

With their **Response** many candidates rose to the occasion and produced some excellent imaginative work. Arguments in favour of the paparazzi focused on freedom of the press; the importance of publicity to the celebrities; the fact that the famous must expect this attention as part of the package and indeed some stars provoke their behaviour. Also it is the fault of the public who are obsessed by the famous and want to know more about their favourite stars.

By contrast the damage caused by the *cazafamosos* included invasion of privacy, bad influence on young people who mimic their behaviour; damage to their families by being in the spotlight; stress to the stars resulting in anorexic or deviant behaviour; overly invasive offensive questioning and the fact that there are more newsworthy stories that the journalists should turn their attention to.

Personal opinions on the value of the Press in society were explored with insight and maturity by the best candidates. Many confessed to an ambivalent attitude: on the one hand deploring harm done by this sort of journalism, (with Princess Diana commonly cited as a victim), whilst on the other hand admitting to being avid readers of periodicals which dish the dirt on celebrities.

The full range of **Language** skills were again on display this year. Many Centres had clearly been training candidates in the use of appropriate phrases and structures e.g. *no creo que sea...*, *dudo que...*, *es lástima que...etc.* which, however their sentence continued, succeeded in lifting it beyond the more pedestrian *creo que su trabajo es importante porque...* Whilst the better candidates were able to incorporate subjunctive structures almost seamlessly, others were determined to use this mood at all costs, frequently with excessive and often inappropriate use of *para que ...*

There were a range of errors in vocabulary and grammar. Weaker candidates frequently offered the infinitive of a verb rather than its conjugated form. Common confusions included *creer* and *crear*, *saber* and *conocer*, and *fotografías* and *fotógrafos*. Some candidates thought *jornada* meant *periodista*. 'On the one/other hand' was often poorly rendered.

'Privacy' was attempted by many but known by few, and 'ask questions' caused a surprising amount of difficulty. *Aunque...* has gained popularity as a sentence opener, as an alternative perhaps to *Sin embargo...* Perennial misconceptions included the use of the conditional for 'ought' or 'should', *es necesito que* and, as ever, the constant misuse of *gustar* (described by one Assistant Examiner as still being under heavy torture and dismemberment).

The misuse of 'embarazada' to mean 'embarrassing' instead of 'pregnant' led to some interesting comments. However, the prize for this year's most promising neologism must surely be awarded for *David y Victoria Beckham's taza mundo fiesta!*

TAREA 4

This was generally done quite well with usually, although not always, a clear correlation with the language mark scores in the previous task. A few candidates still need to be reminded that if the Examiner is unable to read the word ending e.g. *habla* or *hable* it will be treated as a mistake. The most common errors were:

- 1 *ha llevado*
- 5 *me dedicaba*
- 7 *esté*
- 12 *habla*
- 13 *la más*
- 14 *las personas*

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT 2674

General Comments

It is with a real sense of satisfaction that examiners are able to report for the second year running now that the overall majority of centres entering candidates for this session conducted the A2 Speaking and Reading tests very well indeed. Teacher/Examiners were fully aware of the demands of the test and had endeavoured to prepare their candidates thoroughly. Consequently, most candidates were aware of the requirements and intellectual demands of the test and were able to acquit themselves well.

The three stimulus texts, not two as in previous years, were clearly accessible to all but the weakest candidates. *Texto C (Trabajando para cambiar el mundo)* proved to be slightly more demanding in terms of content whereas *Texto A (Las bibliotecas escolares)* and *Texto B (Un problema de peso)* appeared to provide many candidates with more approachable issues to tackle as part of their conversation with the examiner.

Despite the justifiably critical comments made in last summer's report regarding timings for the tests, a small number of centres still felt unable able to stick to the stipulated 15 - 18 minutes. It cannot be stated too emphatically that it is very wrong for Teacher/Examiners to believe that the longer the test, the better the end result will be. Exceeding the maximum of 18 minutes for the test is a needless waste of time and linguistic energy. The Specification makes it clear on page 22 what is expected for the two sections of the test. It needs to be repeated that all centres are urged to keep to these timings. The use of a table-top digital timer is obviously popular in many centres and examiners would like to encourage this practice for the sake of rubric compliance and, more importantly, for the sake of individual candidates.

In administrative terms, the vast majority of oral tests went very smoothly indeed. Almost all centres sent off their cassettes with each candidate having **TWO** accompanying documents - the Working Mark Sheet, duly filled in with the candidate's details, and the topic sheet (Form OTF) with a list of **three** possible topics for discussion. Disappointingly, however, a few centres failed to write the name and number of candidates on the actual cassette case and on a couple of occasions on the actual forms themselves, thereby slowing down the marking process and incurring the wrath of examiners. The actual Candidate Sheets do **not** need to be sent with cassettes and documentation and marks do **not** need to be entered for individual candidates on each marksheet. Needless to say, any marks that Centres feel the urge to enter are ignored by examiners.

Examiners are, once again, hugely grateful to all Teacher/Examiners for making sure that candidates can be heard clearly and at reasonable volume. Some Centres experienced problems with 'noises off' where the inevitable clatter of lesson changeovers could be heard quite clearly on the corridors nearby. Teacher/Examiners just need to bear this in mind when setting up their oral tests. Examiners feel quite strongly that internal microphones should be banned for evermore given that the quality of recording that they produce is comparatively poor. External microphones are far superior.

Comments on Individual Questions

Textos A, B and C

Once again this year, most Teacher/Examiners were more than happy to use most, if not all, of the suggested questions as set out in the Examiner's Handbook. Those candidates who attempt to paraphrase the original text in answer to the questions put to them are far more likely to score higher marks in this section. The ability to interpret the text and give responses promptly and with some degree of detail will score highly. Blatant lifting of the text will always attract far fewer marks. Candidates wishing to score good marks in this section need to respond to and understand both the text and the questions asked by the Teacher/Examiner on the text itself as well as the issues relating to it. Teacher/Examiners who prefer to ask their own questions are perfectly entitled to do but they must ensure that their candidates are given enough opportunity to perform to their linguistic abilities. Simple yes/no questions are really unhelpful to candidates.

General Conversation

Mention was made last year of the fact that candidates will lose marks heavily in Grid 4C (Spontaneity, Comprehension, Responsiveness, Fluency) as a consequence of delivering pre-learnt material when asked to go into more detail with regard to their chosen topic/s. Candidates are not delivering a presentation. They are meant to be engaging in a conversation. A good number of the topics presented by candidates became expositions that were indeed strong on facts but relatively light on evaluation or analysis. Factual knowledge, ideas and opinions relating to the chosen topic/s are all important requirements in this section of the test. In general terms, however, most candidates were able to respond well to the questions put to them.

It is vital that Teacher/Examiners remember to select **one or two** of the candidate's three topics for discussion. Some centres needlessly covered all three topics. It needs to be reiterated that candidates will lose many marks if they fail to make reference to the target language country whilst discussing their topic/s. Last year's report advised centers to give all their candidates a copy of the mark scheme for this test so that they are fully aware of what is required and, more importantly, what is not. This advice still stands.

Inappropriate choices of topic/s for discussion in this part of the test were still, maddeningly, being allowed by some Centres. The Specification clearly requires candidates to select topics for discussion from the list that are of 'current' relevance to the Spanish speaking world. Topics on the origins of the art of Bullfighting or Goya's early works, for example, are not (at the risk of stating the obvious) 'current' in nature. The topic list is on page 34 of the Specification (Revised Edition) and candidates must be able to place their topics for discussion in that list. Additionally, Teacher/Examiners need to be satisfied that this is the case. Marks will be lost in Grid 4E (Factual knowledge, ideas and opinions) for such blatant rubric infringement.

Linguistically, the correct use of "gustar" once again caused extensive grief for a large number of candidates, as did the differences between "ser" and "estar". Ending sentences with "aunque" also seems to have become popular amongst some candidates. Equally, it would appear to be the case that increasing numbers of candidates believe that "Este tema es muy complicado, creo que." (sic.) is acceptable usage. It is not. Candidates will gain marks in this test for the use of sophisticated Advanced Level verb forms coupled with the ability to employ a wide and relevant range of vocabulary. The recent (and highly irritating) phenomenon of rising inflection at the end of each utterance à la Australian Soap Opera star continues to cause problems in terms of authentic intonation for many candidates. Teacher/Examiners are urged to tackle this head on. Nevertheless, the majority of candidates performed well in this test and their teachers deserve much credit.

2675 Spanish Listening, Reading & Writing 2

General Comments:

The overall standard at this session was good, with very few candidates totally out of their depth and many in the higher ranges. Comprehension skills were good, but all examiners remarked on lack of grammatical knowledge, an almost total lack of accents even where these were essential for understanding, and a high number of candidates with virtually illegible writing. It must be reiterated that letters and words which cannot clearly be seen to be correct will be assumed to be mis-spelt: the habit of writing letters which could be either a or o will gain the candidate nothing, and indeed he or she may lose out on occasions when the spelling was in fact correct.

A number of candidates this time ignored the instruction not to write in the margin; this makes it very difficult to count marks and risks disadvantaging the candidate.

There was no sign of candidates being short of time.

Comments on individual questions:

Section A: This task was very effective in assessing the real understanding of the candidates, in that it was immediately obvious whether candidates who wrote down the sounds they heard had understood or not. This greatly reduced the number who had to have undeserved marks because the correct words were there. The task was produced a wide spread of marks, though the majority of candidates made a reasonable attempt at it.

Questions 1(a) to 1(e) caused few problems to any but the weakest candidates.

In 1(f), weak candidates often thought they had heard the hybrid word *roborecipientes* (for *robos recientes*). Many candidates also missed out *daño* from *se ha hecho daño*. This was a place where the best candidates could show off their language skills by using the reflexive structure correctly.

In 1(g), only the best candidates managed to transpose Juanita's first person statement into the third person. Credit was given for comprehension where this had not happened, but this is a skill which would benefit from more practice. *Hasta que acudiera la policía* also eluded all but the best candidates.

1(h) caused few problems, but many candidates targeted the wrong section when answering (i).

In (j), only a minority were able to pick out the essential elements; there was much superfluous information but often the salient facts were missing.

(k) and (l) could each be answered by a single word and caused few problems.

(m) was again challenging as candidates needed to transpose what the police spokesman said into the third person. Many candidates missed one or other of the two points that needed to be made. *Ventan* (for *no se ven tan a menudo*) was a frequent mistake.

Task 2 was well done; the main difficulties were *pesadilla*, *infecunda*, *tos*; and including insufficient detail. Most candidates got 12 marks or more out of 16.

Report on the Units taken in June 2006

In Task 3(a), a majority of candidates missed “approximately” from the answer. There were some challenging definitions of *área*; examiners had expected a straightforward *área* or *superficie*.

(b) presented few problems, but answers to (c) and (d) were often incomplete.

Task 4: Most candidates managed a creditable performance here. The most popular wrong answers were (i) and (d)

Task 5: though most required answers were brief and simple, this discriminated very effectively; there was considerable scope for good candidates to manipulate language. (a) (c), (d) and (e) were straightforward and generally well done.

5(b) Many candidates did not understand that the point was that the rain, which should have stopped earlier in the year, continued until August. Often the right words were used, but in a way that did not convey the right meaning.

5(f) depended on the idea of a good harvest that year, which many candidates missed.

In 5(g), only a minority got the point that the farmers wanted credit, rather than handouts, from the regional authority.

In 5(h), most candidates had the right answer, but a sizeable minority said the wife was dead or had left her husband.

6(a) Very few candidates had any trouble in providing the required number of content points.

Task 6(b): the essay topic (animals in zoos) was within the reach of all (indeed, many candidates wrote far too much). Everyone had an opinion, and virtually all were able to express it. Language in 6(b) was significantly better than that in 6(a). All candidates wrote on the topic set: this marks a most pleasing advance on previous examination sessions and examiners fervently hope that in future papers candidates will continue to write on the set topic and not attempt to regurgitate the text, as has all too frequently been the case in the past. Many candidates introduced obviously pre-learnt phrases, sometimes inappropriately (*que yo sepa* was this year’s favourite, with *si yo fuera* a close runner up; neither is really quite such a catch-all phrase as its adherents appear to think). The subjunctive was frequently used, even if not always quite appropriately (*pienso que sea*).

Grammar errors included gender; agreement; tense use, especially preterite/imperfect; verb endings; *ser/estar* and accents.

2676 Spanish Culture & Society

There was a wide variety of approaches in the essays on this paper. While some candidates apparently relied heavily on essays they had prepared beforehand, others clearly enjoyed thinking in the exam, using their material and ideas flexibly. Examiners read careful studies of the health and education systems in Cuba and their consequences; we read appreciations of Ecuador and its present social situation; we were taken through the pros and cons of the current building boom in Spain, the problems of the *macrobotellón* in Spanish cities, and the present and the past of ETA. In addition we read perceptive comments about Yerma, Juan, Víctor, el Coronel and his wife, Mosén Millán and Paco. We appreciated the social pressures, the importance of honour and reputation and pride, the class division, the attitude of the church to a prevailing political system, the simplicity and poverty and attractiveness of the people of Almería in their barren landscape, not to mention the power of dreams in a society where the reality may be less than easy to digest.

There was also a wide variety of levels of achievement. It was a delight to read from candidates who showed a deft and discriminating appreciation of the works of literature which they had studied. It was disappointing where some seemed to treat the paper as a general essay paper; they apparently forgot that the subtopics for section C were announced earlier so that students would do research and have current ideas and examples. So it was that well prepared candidates studying alcohol (question 17a) knew about the *macrobotellón* phenomenon from earlier this year, or mentioned specific examples of women holding important jobs in public office or private firms (question 15b), or knew of the current situation regarding ETA (question 15a). Conversely it was disappointing that candidates, writing on a healthy diet (question 17b), resorted to the old chestnut that the government must do something, including banning the high fat diet; or that some writing on ETA (question 15a) had incorrect information. In non-literary essays, there were sometimes statistics put forward that were hard to credit. Overall some candidates were capable of addressing the questions in a focused way and reaching convincing conclusions. Others were conversant with the chosen topic and made good use of what they had studied, while there was a small number who did not seem to have grasped the significance of their topics and produced trite answers.

The division between literary and non-literary topics was about half and half. Some candidates worked exclusively in one of those areas while others chose an essay from each. Most who answered questions from Section B did so in order to find an additional essay title about the prescribed texts of Section A: this did not always work well. Those who had studied texts specifically for the themes of section B invariably found that their texts provided ample material for interesting essays. In section A, there was renewed interest in the extract questions (a); candidates were often well prepared and, on the whole, were well able to fulfil the task of relating the passage to the rest of the prescribed text. There were no problems for candidates who chose to re-apply some of the questions to Spanish America rather than Spain. Candidates need to remember in their preparation that the final mark is the average of the marks for two essays; while some sustained a level of performance across both pieces of work, some quite noticeably did not. Some candidates wrote very long essays – not in itself an issue, but it became a problem when the essay was poorly planned and lacked focus.

Some candidates did not attend well to practical matters. The requirements are clear: to write 2 essays, not 1 or 3, each of the 2 on a different text or topic. A few candidates this year attempted to answer every question on the paper. The failure to identify essays by any means may inadvertently lead to a candidate's being misjudged: candidates are asked to label the essays clearly with a topic number and (for sections A and C) a letter (a) or (b). It is helpful to write the (same) numbers in the boxes on the front page of the answer booklet. Candidates do not help their cause by writing in such great haste that numerous additions – in tiny handwriting – are appended in various places on several pages, indicated by arrows or asterisks. If a mistake is made, a simply crossing out is sufficient; correction fluid is not allowed by the examination rules.

Poor handwriting must deserve an entry of its own. In any examination it must be unwise for candidates to make their handwriting difficult to read. When there is assessment for grammar, spelling and accuracy in the use of a language, it makes even more sense to ensure that vowels are clearly formed and consonants recognisable. The all purpose symbol which could be any vowel except perhaps *i* has no place in an examination script.

Linguistically, words and concepts which caused problems tended to be these: *ambos* and other ways of rendering 'both'; *mil*, *millones* and *milliones*; statistics in general; use of articles; anglicised vocabulary (*realizar* for *darse cuenta*, *monstrar*, *demonstrar*, *europeoano*, *la vista* for *opinión*,); agreements of adjectives; comparisons (use of *más*, *menos*, *tanto*, *tan*); passives and the avoidance of the passive; *ser* and *estar*; writing with English syntax (*las dificultades que aprendemos de*); and pronouns (subject and object).

Comments on selected questions

1 The few answers on *Eva Luna* made for refreshing reading.

3 There was a small number of essays on *Casona*, which were mostly handled successfully, making much of the role of illusion and its consequences.

4 The majority of candidates had studied *Yerma*; some used this play to answer question 10 rather than deal with question 4. Many of the answers (on 4 and 10) revealed a thorough understanding of the play and an ability to appreciate the tensions within and between the principal characters, with a good awareness of the situation of women at the time when it was written.

5 This question was also well handled and dealt sensitively with the colonel and his situation. There was more or less the same number of essays on (a) and (b). 5b was well done by candidates who focussed on why it was a moving book as well as the colonel's difficulties.

8 largely (a). Candidates recognised all the major points and mostly wove the details from the extract into an analysis of the whole book.

10 There were quite a few essays, using either *Yerma* or *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* as their source. Mostly these were good answers, but some failed to specify when the plays were written.

15a This question was not simply asking for a history of ETA. Generally candidates showed a good knowledge of recent history, in some cases very aware of latest developments.

15b A mixture of responses. At best, they were thorough and backed by statistics and details of government initiatives. Candidates need to be aware that the topic is about modern Spain and that the past is therefore of specific but limited relevance.

16 All had studied Almodóvar and had obviously enjoyed their course. Many good points were made, showing good understanding of the films and of the trend of his film-making.

17a A large number wrote on this question. Mostly able to quote statistics and anecdotes. Many made the point that, although it is a problem among men, the area of greatest concern is among the young.

17b. Also very popular choice, but sometimes lacking in specific information. However some went into good detail.

18a Good evidence of thorough study: statistics, government policy etc.

18b Only a few chose this question, which was not an invitation simply to list all alternative kinds of tourism.

19 Generally answered by well-informed candidates in quite a passionate manner.

20 Cuba was a popular choice, which proved a good area of study. Candidates gave thorough, thoughtful answers.

21 Again Cuba was a popular choice. Answers often written by well-informed candidates who made good use of the material studied and of the questions set.

2677/01 SPANISH CULTURE AND SOCIETY – COURSEWORK

The quality of coursework submitted this Session was very similar to previous years. Candidates were awarded marks across the whole range, from 60 (the maximum mark available) to 14. There was evidence of detailed research and highly motivated, individual pieces of work.

Moderators intervened in just over half of the Centres this Session. This is still quite a high percentage and seems to be stable rather than decreasing, which is what would have been expected as the syllabus has been unchanged for several years. Part of the reason for intervention is simply administrative error or omission. Centres are requested to ensure that all documentation is checked and included with the scripts. The checklist provided on the cover sheet should alert staff to what is required and Moderators also ask that word counts are checked and verified. If any elements are missing or incorrect, Moderators will contact the Centre. In the case of incorrect word counts, the Centre will be asked to re-count and submit the figure to the Moderator. This is likely to result in a change of mark, which would then mean an amendment, again requiring the Centre's attention. These procedures are extremely time-consuming and can cause disruption at a time when students are no longer in class and members of staff have other responsibilities. It is therefore preferable to deal with administration thoroughly before submission.

The other cause for intervention is the reassessment of marks awarded by the Centre. This Session, marks were decreased by up to 20 and increased by up to 8 on individual candidate's work. As before, the main area of disagreement is Grid 6A1/2, marking content and argument. Candidates must show detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic and assertions must be substantiated by reference to a text, an item on the bibliography or other source. It is not possible to attain high marks on 6A2 if there is no argument, or if the title is not addressed. There seemed to be more changes to language marks this Session as well. Candidates who are awarded 7 or more on the language grids show thorough understanding of the grammatical structures required at this level and are able to manipulate the language accurately.

Moderators report that the key factors likely to aid success in this component can be summarised thus:

- effective guidance from the teacher in choosing a title, compiling a bibliography and constructing a plan
- listening to and acting on advice given (in accordance with the published guidelines)
- essay writing skills
- wide reading of Spanish source materials
- expressing ideas in Spanish which is not translated from English or with the aid of computer translation
- careful and thorough checking – typographical errors are not ignored
- following the rules – correct word count, correct length, sources acknowledged.

**Advanced GCE Spanish 3863 and 7863
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2671	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2672	Raw	80	66	57	49	41	33	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2673	Raw	60	46	41	37	33	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2674	Raw	60	48	43	38	33	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2675	Raw	80	66	60	54	48	42	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2676	Raw	60	46	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2677	Raw	60	50	45	40	35	30	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3863	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7863	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3863	31	54.4	70.4	84.6	93.6	100.0	1,578
7863	37.6	66.4	86.4	95.5	99.1	100.0	1303

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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