

Report on the Units

January 2007

3863/7863/MS/R/07J

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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.

Mark schemes and Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers.

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2671 Speaking

General Comments

Although there were comparatively few candidates for the January examination, the performance of the candidates as a whole largely echoed that in previous sessions. As always, OCR's examiners and moderators thank all those in the Centres for the professionalism with which the majority of the tests were carried out. There were very few examples of tests having been conducted with incorrect timing or in a manner contrary to the Instructions.

Administrative problems were few overall but we should like to remind Centres of some of the continuing issues that can hinder the marking and moderating process, and also refer those conducting the tests, in cases of doubt, to publication CW1242, Instructions for Internally Conducted Oral Examinations.

OCR examiners and moderators need to receive tapes promptly, as soon as the test has been conducted, together with individual candidate mark sheets duly headed AND the candidate topic forms. Candidates' names and numbers should be also written on the cassette box and announced on the tape.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1 Role Plays

The role-play options within varying contexts required candidates to give relevant information to the teacher/ examiner and to act as a client and use a degree of persuasion and direction to achieve a satisfactory outcome. Those candidates who had studied the brief effectively in the preparation time were largely successful in conveying at least the essential information contained in the stimulus materials. At the higher levels, many candidates warmed to the situations and made commendable efforts to develop a dialogue with the examiner, rather than waiting for a series of questions and answers.

Grid 1A of the mark scheme assesses the candidate's ability to use the stimulus material in a targeted manner, relevant to the task set. Grid 1B awards credit for the quality of response, the fluency and the degree of initiative and imagination shown in carrying out the task. There is a degree of interdependence in these criteria: the intention is to reward candidates for relevant participation in a focused role play, rather than merely reacting to a random list of comprehension questions. To a certain extent, the candidate's own performance is inevitably linked with the effectiveness of the techniques adopted and degree of preparation shown by the examiner. There were many good examples of well-paced and interactive exchanges, in which teachers were aware of the need to question the information given by the candidate or to request clarification or suggestions about how the information might help them – as client – to resolve a dilemma or come to an appropriate decision; less satisfactorily, a minority of centres continued to use the role play as an opportunity for closed-ended questions and answers, with little progression, interconnection or development.

As has been frequently mentioned in previous reports, linguistic shortcomings (grid 1C) continued to be basic slips of structure, gender, agreement, together with weaknesses in GCSE-level vocabulary and in areas such as numbers, forms of address, accuracy and range of tenses. Candidates should be encouraged to raise the register and range of the language used, so that they have a reasonable opportunity to rise above the “Adequate” band; unfortunately, the tendency noted above in some centres to focus on simplistic factual questions of content did little to encourage some candidates to take linguistic risk or to use a sufficiently wide range of AS-level structures.

- 1) (a) Role play A focused on publicity material for England’s North West. The majority of candidates coped adequately with the factual information. A general tendency however, especially of weaker candidates, was to plough through the material sequentially in an attempt to summarise the information. The discriminator in this role play was the requirement in the second part of the Task to convince the client that the region would be appropriate for *toda la familia*, and to relate the aspects of the area to the interests of the various family members: one of the bullet points, for example, specifically called for *lo que puede hacer una persona activa*: merely mentioning the existence of countryside and hills in the area did not really address the issue of *hacer*. Similarly, in response to the opening questions, only the most perceptive candidates seized on the client’s assertion that most of the family liked cultural pursuits. So the relevance of the galleries, museums and historic Roman city mentioned in the stimulus was frequently under-exploited. A further point of detail sometimes overlooked was Manchester’s round-the-clock attractions – “day and night”.

The more open, extended questions about holidays and travel were generally tackled adequately, in accordance with the linguistic abilities of the candidate.

The vocabulary items were generally without problem: “hills” presented some difficulties – *montañas* apparently the word of choice; “galleries” was generally Anglicised with “*galería*”, rather than “*museo de arte*”; “seaside resorts” was frequently overlooked – *sitios*, for example, not adequately conveying the meaning.

Surprisingly, given the almost predictable nature now of many of the AS role plays, very many candidates – including those in the top bands – could not cope with the website address and the French name for “w” - *double vé* - was the norm – unexpected, since this had rarely been a problem in the past.

- 1) (b) Role play B about groceries delivered to your door was generally tackled with enthusiasm. The initial questions to establish the situation were adequately phrased. Essential information was forthcoming and candidates made a good effort to point out the positive nature of the service.

A few points tended to be overlooked. Many candidates did not really convey the particular advantages of this service in winter or in bad weather. Other points of detail that marked out better candidates were the convenience of timed deliveries within one-hour slots and goods arriving in perfect condition. A further discriminator was the claim that the delivery would include just what the client ordered, with no substitutions.

The more open questions were tackled quite well, especially the benefits or otherwise of buying on line.

Language difficulties were generally those predictable: "rain" or "raining" caused problems with weaker candidates; "frozen" was frequently conveyed by *helado*. The old hurdle of "pounds" attracted the usual variants of *libros*, *libres*, *libras*; the telephone numbers (especially "nine") were sometimes incorrect. Again, the Spanish letter "w" in the website was frequently Frenchified.

- 1) (c) Role play C dealt with the advantages of index-linked savings certificates. Again, careful attention by the candidate to the outline and task requirements given in the Candidate's Sheet paid off. The majority of candidates who did this managed to convey the essential information quite well, particularly how the certificates may be obtained.

Points of detail not always addressed were the fact that the savings would also be for a child just starting school (i.e. under seven); only a few candidates pointed out the relevant information on the stimulus material. A number of candidates did not point out that there was no tax to pay, though virtually all covered the choice of time period.

The more open discursive questions were generally tackled adequately, with some interesting observations.

Many of the key vocabulary items were present in the Candidate's instructions. Where difficulties arose, these tended to be if a candidate tried to translate the item rather than convey the meaning: "apply over the phone", "lines are open", "you get to keep all your money at the end", etc. "By post" caused some apparent difficulty (or was overlooked); as elsewhere, the website address prefix "www" was a surprise stumbling block.

Part 2 Topic Presentation and Discussion

Topic Presentation

The presentations were the usual mix of the predictable and the individualistic choice. The majority of the old warhorses were in evidence, bullfighting, immigration and tourism, though music and flamenco are sprinting up the charts. There were some interesting and well-researched topics, including cinema, particularly Almodóvar, education, and aspects of art. In virtually all cases, the need to address, at least in initial intention, the Hispanic context was taken on board, though the consistency of the focus did vary considerably. It is worth repeating that topics that generalise, without showing awareness, relevant knowledge and focus on the Spanish-speaking world will not gain a good mark for Assessment Objective 4 of the Specifications.

The actual quality of the presentation varied, though most attained at least the “Adequate” band of grid 1D of the mark scheme. As usual the depth of content varied considerably. The presentation should provide a relevant and coherent introduction to the topic and show evidence of preparation, essential information and give a basis for subsequent discussion. The presentation should not be merely a statement of the bullet points the candidate wishes to cover in the subsequent discussion.

Topic Discussion

The ML Topic Form is the outline for the discussion. This element of debate is important and forms one of the criteria for grid 1E of the Specification. We repeat the observation that a delicate balance has to be maintained by the teacher /examiner to allow candidates the space and opportunity to show their knowledge; however candidates must not be permitted to give a series of further mini-presentations. We reiterate the point made in previous reports that candidates’ interests are better served if teacher/ examiners focus on the substance or subtext of the points listed on the topic form, rather than merely asking the printed question and then sitting back. Candidates should be given the opportunity to refute, support and to clarify a point in accordance with their own level of competence: 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. The majority of candidates had adequate subject-specific vocabulary. Weaknesses and shortcomings continued to be in basic structures, essential verb forms and everyday vocabulary.

Pronunciation was generally at least adequate, though with inauthenticities of intonation. Nevertheless, the standard of pronunciation of many candidates was pleasingly high.

2672 Listening/Reading & Writing

General Comments

The level of the paper this year was appropriate although it did appear to be easier than some of the very demanding papers in the past, particularly in respect of Questions 4 and 6 which have sometimes proved to be enormous barriers. This time all questions were readily accessible, even though the achievement of full marks on any one was limited to the best candidates.

The standard of performance was good overall with most candidates clearly understanding what was expected of them. A limited number were entered without the skills to cope, but perhaps less than in previous years.

There were few unfinished scripts and most candidates seemed to have sufficient time to do themselves justice, one even finding a few moments to meticulously colour yellow the taxis on page 3.

Comments on individual questions

Section 1.

All four tasks in this section proved to be extremely useful discriminators and generated a reasonably wide spread of marks.

Tarea 1

This task generally produced average to good marks but, surprisingly, very few candidates managed to answer all five questions correctly. The major stumbling block seemed to be confusion between 'F' and '?' in questions d) and f). As usual with this type of exercise, it is vital for candidates to appreciate that when a text does not mention an issue raised in the question, then the proper response is '?'. Take for example question d): *los taxistas suspendieron el servicio*. There is no indication of this action on the part of the taxi drivers in the text, but because it did not happen (in the text) does not mean that it is therefore false or untrue, as many candidates seemed to assume. There is merely no mention of it, and the correct response is '?'. A false (F) answer is required where a section of the text is a clear contradiction of what is stated or asked in the question. Repeated practice of this kind of exercise, highlighting the above distinction, would undoubtedly pay dividends.

A further problem arose with question b): *El incidente se produjo durante la noche*. The answer to this hinged on the interpretation of the phrase: *a la una de la madrugada*, which many candidates obviously felt related more to morning than night.

Tarea 2

This apparently rather simple task proved to be much more difficult than expected and, as with Tarea 1, very few candidates were able to score full marks, with many, in fact, only being able to answer c) correctly. The distinction between *vida* and *muerte* in a) was not easy to appreciate and the order of *poemas* and *música* in d) and e) was often inverted.

Tarea 3

Once again, this was a task that produced a wide range of marks and, although most candidates were able to achieve 50% or more, very few managed to score full marks. While the first three questions proved to be reasonably straightforward, questions d), g), and h) caused significant problems, probably because of difficulties with vocabulary (*aumentar*, *estar harto*) and in the case of question h) because of the complexity of the reasoning, which involved making a distinction between *los mayores* and *los demás*, followed by the association of *los demás* with *los visitantes más jóvenes*.

Tarea 4

This was another task producing a good range of marks, although again most candidates were able to achieve a 50% score. The most common mistakes were in a) which produced a variety of answers, c) where “G” was often given, e) with a good number of “O”s, and j) where “R” was a frequent response.

Section 2

All three of the exercises in this section required thoughtful handling and together provided a good test of ability in that they forced candidates to distinguish between the different people involved and bear in mind who the “we”, “they” and “you” were. As we shall see, if candidates attempted to transcribe the spoken word directly without fully understanding, then frequently marks were lost.

Tarea 5

In the main this task was well done, and revealed in the majority of candidates a good understanding of the spoken text, a sound linguistic ability to enable them to convey its meaning accurately and a high standard of literal transcription

Questions a) and b) provided few problems for candidates as did c), although here there were often difficulties with spelling (*arquitecto*, *proyectos*, *colaborado*) while *varios* sometimes emerged as *barrios*.

Question d) was also answered well in most cases, although it introduced a theme that was to run through a number of the questions and cause some confusion to those candidates who did not think sufficiently about what they were writing. It involved the need to change the possessive adjective, where *los servicios de mi compañía* of the spoken text needed to become *los servicios de su compañía* in the written answer in order to avoid distorting the meaning. This kind of transposition, which also involved personal pronouns, was also a key factor in questions g) and i).

Questions e) and f) were successfully answered in the main but g) caused real problems for all candidates and only the best were able to restructure the spoken words effectively enough to give a clear meaning. There was the initial problem of converting *me parece*, which often became *se parece*, but the real difficulty lay with both the understanding and transposition of *llevamos años especializándonos*.

Question h) was well done by practically all candidates as were i) (despite many not recognising *gama*) and j).

Tarea 6

This exercise did not prove as difficult as expected despite a number of problem areas and was rather better done than in previous sessions, with most candidates able to score over 50%. In addition to misunderstanding the written text, English expression tended to be a problem for some candidates, who appeared able to take incoherence into new realms (“has a good proportion of maintaining its class of work and reforms”, for example, or “ anything small to big that is”). There were also considerable opportunities for the misspelling of words (“installation, necessities, remodelling, detailed, guarantee, maintenance, collaboration, architects, engineers”) and few candidates who were able to avoid completely these pitfalls.

In terms of the Spanish language, *proporciona* was not widely known, although many guessed well, *la Costa* was often written as if it were a town, *jardines ornamentales* became “garden ornaments”. *Insonorización* was expected to prove a challenge, although again, many rose to it; *apoyo fiable* was not well known but produced many effective guesses; *festivos* was rendered as “festivals” and even one very inventive clause “all of our work days are like parties”. *Equipo* was often rendered as “equipment”, while *disponibles*, *avería* and *presupuesto* were a mystery to all but the select few.

Tarea 7

The overall level of performance was high, with very few candidates unable to convey the message with reasonable accuracy. There appeared to be evidence of better preparation of candidates, with fewer using the second person *tú* and *vosotros* forms, and less evidence of the literal translation of the memorandum (as in the reproduction in Spanish of phrases like "Please tell Sr. Espoz"). In addition, standard structures such as *le ruego que*, *me gustaría*, *ponerse en contacto con*, etc. are increasingly in evidence and suggest that creative use of material in past papers is producing positive results.

However, many of the standard errors resurfaced once again with, as ever, verb forms causing the most serious problems. There were surprising difficulties with tenses, for example, which at this stage ought to have been successfully resolved. Significant numbers of candidates were unable to give an accurate rendering in Spanish of "we have not decided" (*no tenemos decidir*), "I will be visiting", "he will give", "we will need". Other problems included the passive "will be organised" and the adjectival use of the past participle "offered".

Further mistakes included *ya no* for *todavía no*, *nos* for *nuestro*, the common use of *entre* for "within", the similarly common difficulty in finding an appropriate phrase in Spanish to render "in the meantime", or the inability to use *lo que* correctly.

How to express "we are interested in" also caused considerable grief – *interesaríamos*, for example, or *somos interesantes*, and even *gustaríamos* were frequently offered.

Finally, the subjunctive structure required by: "I would like him to contact" caused considerable havoc and was only really successfully handled by the native speakers.

2673/01 AS Spanish Reading and Writing

General Comments

Outcomes to this examination were heavily influenced by what was in many cases a disappointing performance in Task 3. In this Section of the paper, perhaps because of over-familiarity with the topic or recent experiences of the festive season, there was a widespread failure to answer the questions. It cannot be reiterated too strongly that Task 3 carries half the total marks available for the examination and two thirds of these are earned, not by the candidate's skill in writing Spanish, but by the ability to accomplish the two tasks which are set.

Performances in the other Sections of the paper were far more typical, with candidates accessing the full range of marks appropriate to their ability. Once again, either by oversight or intention, some answers were left blank. This never fails to surprise, as there are no minus marks for a wrong guess. The vast majority of candidates appeared to have ample time to complete the paper; although there were a few who seemed troubled by the clock.

Comments on Individual Questions

Task 1

This was possibly the most demanding of tasks 1, 2 and 4, and scores of 4 or 5 correct answers were not uncommon from candidates who scored well in other parts of the paper.

However, scores of 6 and 7 were not especially rare, rewarding those who took the time to tease out the right answer from the evidence in front of them. Questions (a) and (g) gave more difficulty than any others.

Task 2

Interestingly, there was often a lack of correlation of performance with Task 1. The text appeared to be generally well understood and most candidates were able to score more than half marks. The two most common errors were 9 for (d) and 5 for (h).

Task 3

Answers to this question were, in the main, disappointing. Far too many candidates appeared to be blissfully unaware of what was required of them. Their task is to read a passage of Spanish, paraphrase relevant parts of it and then give their response to certain ideas arising from it

The first question read: *Según el texto, ¿cuál es el impacto de los Reyes Magos o Papá Noel en los niños o los padres de hoy?* The mark scheme identified more than a dozen relevant facts in the text which, if successfully reproduced in the candidate's own words, would score up to a maximum of 10. Sadly, many candidates appeared only to skim the text before heading off to write often unrelated pieces about how Christmas affects families, thereby denying themselves fairly easy marks which were there for the taking.

The second question was: *¿Por qué se mantiene esta tradición? Da tu opinión.* Here candidates were expected to give their opinions on why the falsehood of the Kings or Father Christmas bringing presents to children is widely perpetuated. Those candidates who successfully gave opinions on this scored well. Common suggestions included:

- 'it creates an atmosphere of magic'
- 'it stimulates children's imagination'
- 'it gives pleasure to children and parents'
- 'parents want to reproduce their own happy childhood experiences'
- 'it's an old tradition which will never disappear'
- 'it's closely associated with the religious significance of Christmas'
- 'it's a big earner for shops and business – they'll never let it go'

However, many candidates once again commonly paid only superficial attention to the question which they had been asked, preferring to write about 'how nice it is for the whole family to sit down and eat together' or 'should Christmas be cancelled?' Such opinions, no matter how interesting or convincingly argued, were not eligible for any of the 10 marks available for Response to Text.

The level of language in which these answers were written crossed the whole spectrum of ability, with scores ranging from 10 to 2. What was particularly disappointing was when candidates achieved a good score for Language but failed to add to it by being guilty of not answering the questions.

Common inaccuracies in language included:

- para que nos se sientan inferior_ a sus amigos*
- la Navidad/tradición es divertido*
- por los padres y los niños for para*
- tiempo for época (de Navidad)*
- pedir una cuestión and preguntar por*
- manteniendo for mantener*
- la gente gastan*
- jugetes for juguetes*
- realizan for se dan cuenta*
- todo que for todo lo que*
- la resulta and porque de*
- use of the conditional tense to convey *debería* etc
- a surprising number of errors in forming the future tense

Task 4

This turned out to be a fairly accessible test of candidates' knowledge of grammar. Scores of 14 and 15 were not uncommon as also, at the other end of the scale, were scores of 4, 5 or 6.

The questions which presented more problems were:

- (1) *tiene* for *de*
- (2) *la* for *le*
- (3) *mal* for *mala*
- (6) *de/por* for *a*
- (9) *sabe* for *sepa*
- (11) *gusté* for *gustó*

2675 Spanish: Listening, Reading & Writing 2

General Comments

Generally candidates performed well on this paper. A few candidates appeared to have been entered at the wrong level, because it was evident that they were struggling with the texts and the tasks. The majority, however, performed well or very well.

A number of comments should be made which apply to a range of candidates and questions. Firstly, it is important that candidates are selective in the information they include in their answers; in Tareas 1 and 2, candidates can lose marks by including too much information or by including sometimes irrelevant or incorrect information; in Tarea 6, candidates can waste considerable effort if they transfer the meaning of a whole paragraph, when the question is clearly asking them to give specific information only.

Secondly, the quality of handwriting was on occasions very poor. Candidates cannot be awarded comprehension marks if their handwriting cannot be read. Likewise it is difficult to award marks for linguistic accuracy to poorly formed letters, if only because it would be unfair to penalise only those candidates who have a common sense to write legibly.

Thirdly, there is a clear instruction on the paper to write answers in the spaces and boxes indicated. If candidates are providing the correct answers, it is unlikely that there will not be sufficient space. If extra space is needed, extra sheets should be used, they should be clearly labelled and, most importantly, attached physically to the answer sheet. While good presentation is not in itself rewarded, bad presentation carries an inevitable risk of a loss of marks.

Comment on Individual Questions:

Tarea 1

As noted above, some candidates transcribed too much information.

- a) A certain number of candidates reported that the studies consisted of academic subjects and *gramática*.
- b) Confusion with pronouns led some to report that Laura's parents enrolled themselves (*matricularse*) rather than her (*matricularla*) for the course.
- c), d) and e) these caused few problems.
- f), g), h) and j) Sometimes candidates lost marks because they did not give a full answer.
- i) and k) Candidates did not appear to have read the question fully. The first asks how it was that he was able to visit, which requires more than that he was invited. The second asks what he did, not what the students did.
- l) Frequently candidates gave incomplete or incorrect information here.

Tarea 2

There was sometimes confusion over the meaning of the words "Hispanic", "Spanish" and "Spanish-speaking". Some candidates were unable to express themselves clearly here in written English.

- a) The meaning of *PAPEL* defeated some candidates.
- b) There was confusion over exactly what the choice was regarding teaching in either English or in both languages.
- c) and d) were usually well answered.

- e) There were problems with expressing clearly the second wish, for children to be integrated into US society.
- f) While the first part of f) presented few problems on the whole, not all candidates saw the relevance of the second part.
- h) Weaker candidates tended not to understand the issues expressed at this point in the article.

Tarea 3

Candidates who had given themselves the time to read the article carefully generally scored highly on this exercise.
Items c) and d) regularly trapped the unwary.

Tarea 4

Some candidates would have had more success if they had remembered that these phrases are underlined in this article; this is to help candidates see the phrases in context.

A surprising number of candidates did not seem to understand the concept of a frontier, or the meaning of *hispanohablante*.

Weaker candidates saw *creamos* as linked with the verb *creer*.

- d) This defeated all but the best; many candidates thought the adverb was a geographical reference.

Tarea 5

Some candidates seemed to have forgotten, or not to have read, the instruction in the rubric, that they should use their own words wherever possible.

- b) The phrase *a pesar de* was apparently not known by a fair number of candidates.
- e) This was a challenge for many candidates who struggled with the language and the concept.

Tarea 6

As mentioned before, inefficient selection of material was an issue in the first part of this exercise: sometimes there was too much, sometimes not enough. Throughout this exercise, it was of concern to see the number of candidates who appear to have very little knowledge of verbs, gender and agreements in Spanish. Equally of course, a considerable number were able to express themselves elegantly and accurately in the foreign language.

A wide range of views were expressed on the sabbatical year. A large number were opposed to it, because it would cost them too much money or because they would never be able to go back to studying again. Many were in favour on the grounds that they deserved a break in their education. One wanted to live dangerously. Some also thought about what they could give to other people in other countries, although examiners did wonder whether Spanish would welcome references to their country as apparently part of the third world.

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Spanish 3863
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2671/01	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2671/02	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2671/03	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2672	Raw	80	68	60	52	45	38	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2673	Raw	60	42	37	33	29	25	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 (Agg Code)	300	240	210	180	150	120	0

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

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3863 (Agg Code)	38.3	54.2	72.9	83.2	98.1	100.0	107

**Advanced GCE Spanish 7863
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2675	Raw	80	62	57	52	48	44	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	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
7863 (Agg Code)	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
7863 (Agg Code)	10	70	80	100.0	100.0	100.0	10

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