

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01

Speaking

General

The majority of tests were carried out in full accordance with the requirements. Centres are now generally familiar with the procedure to be followed in the conduct of the tests and with the examination techniques which are appropriate for this level and which are likely to be in the best interests of the candidates. Teachers/Examiners involved with the tests in the Centres are thanked for their part in this exercise.

Previous reports have outlined problems involving aspects of administration that have caused difficulties for the moderation process. Although relatively few, a small number of Centres – regrettably slightly more this session – did not send the necessary documentation, or did not complete mark sheets or wrote only a total percentage mark, or, in isolated cases, awarded marks above the maxima. Working mark sheets *must* show a mark for each of the criteria for each section of the test, i.e. thirteen columns: three for part one, five each for parts two and three, not just a section total, or the overall total. Without this information, the Centre's marks cannot be confirmed.

Recording quality was generally good, but please check that candidates are clearly audible, and please re-wind tapes to the start before sending.

Topic presentation and discussion

There were very few examples this session of a topic being offered that was not in some way related to the Spanish-speaking context. Problems were sometimes encountered, however, when a candidate would deal with this context by implication rather than making it very clear how the topic was particularly relevant to the country or area concerned. In preparing for the topic, candidates should be encouraged, for example, to include some concrete reference, statistics, opinions and analysis, etc., which will make quite clear what the cultural link is. It was fairly common for a number of introductory presentations to fail to mention concretely the name of a Spanish-speaking country and the Moderator was left to wonder where exactly the candidate was talking about. Even when the tests are being conducted in a Centre within a Spanish-speaking country, care must be taken to show that the topic is in fact being specifically focused on and relevant to that Hispanic viewpoint or cultural environment. Candidates who insist on dealing with the topic at a very general level only cannot score a high mark for their presentation.

Teachers/Examiners are important in their role to probe and question information given by candidates – candidates should be given an opportunity to counter an argument or substantiate a point of view in the discussion. In a few cases the topic conversation tended to take the form of a trigger question inviting the candidate to give a prepared answer, or another short presentation; in such cases the candidate will again not achieve the highest marks for fluency and responsiveness. Similarly, to gain access to the highest marks for linguistic range and maturity, candidates must be encouraged – and given the opportunity – to respond to higher-level language in terms of syntax and register.

We reiterate that the presentation is a formal exercise. As a coherent introduction to the topic, candidates should show relevant knowledge with evidence of preparation and organisation, an appropriate level of language, and delivery that will communicate effectively with clear diction, accurate pronunciation and intonation.

General Conversation

Many Centres had acted on previous reminders that the general conversation should be at an advanced-level standard, both linguistically and contextually. This part of the test allowed candidates to deal with topics in an informed but non-specialist way, and frequently included discussion of issues related to education, society, political events, a news item, and so on. Candidates are assessed on their ability to use an appropriate range of linguistic skills, including grammar, accuracy, range and register, when dealing with factual or hypothetical matters. The Examiner will, of course, adjust the level and topic according to the performance or ability of the individual candidate, but it is important to give all candidates the opportunity and expectation to go beyond everyday, predictable areas and language, and to operate at their best.

Questions asked by the candidate

Most candidates managed to ask the Examiner questions and obtain information. The Examiner should remind candidates to do so, if such questioning has not arisen naturally in the course of the conversations. Centres are reminded that high marks should not be awarded for rhetorical, all-purpose or one-word questions. Please be reminded that candidates should be offered the opportunity to seek information from the Examiner in both the topic and the general conversations in order to be assessed fully (marks out of five in each section) – there were occasions when this was done only at one stage in the test, though marks had erroneously been credited for both.

SPANISH

Paper 8685/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The level of difficulty in the November 2007 Spanish Reading and Writing examination was fairly evenly spread throughout the paper. No single question proved to be more challenging or accessible than the others. Although a few less able candidates had difficulty finishing within the allocated time, the vast majority had no such problems. There were encouraging signs that Centres are coaching their candidates in the techniques which can enhance performance in this component. Familiarity with test types and the skills required can often boost outcomes by a grade or so. As always, candidates' performances covered the complete range of ability and there were many pleasing pieces of work submitted at all levels.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

A good technique for tackling this type of question (a test type which is in very regular use) is to copy out the phrase for which the equivalent is being sought. If the equivalent is then written alongside it is then possible to see how good a match has been found and, importantly, to see whether it contains surplus or insufficient material. On far too many occasions candidates successfully spotted the correct target but failed to pick up the mark when they added or omitted words. The **exact** equivalent is required to gain the mark.

Generally speaking, however, this question proved to be a fairly gentle, familiar start to the paper with none of the targeted phrases appearing to be more elusive than its fellows.

Question 2

As with **Question 1**, it is a good idea to write the phrase down before attempting the required manipulation. Candidates can then see at a glance whether their answer contains all the elements of the original. The best way to check if the task has been accomplished is to try to fit the answer into the original text and see if the original meaning is retained.

- (a) This was not the first time that candidates have been asked to convert *al + infinitive* to *cuando + indicative* and many correct answers were received. The commonest error was the use of the preterite tense, which would not fit in the original text.
- (b) A wide variety of versions was offered, with the two most acceptable being *los juegos se suceden uno tras otro* and *a este juego le sucede uno tras otro*. Some candidates spoiled an otherwise correct answer by adding an unnecessary *y luego otro*.
- (c) There were many possible ways to answer this question, using either the subjunctive or the indicative forms of *tener*, *cumplir*, *alcanzar* or *llegar a*. A not uncommon error was to make the verb plural, which again would not fit back into the original text.

- (d) This was another question which allowed for many variations of answers, with *falta* being permissible as either a verb or a noun form. The essential requirement was to retain the idea of 'they lack', and this could be successfully rendered by: *les falta / les hace falta* or *tienen / sufren (de) (una) falta* etc.
- (e) By contrast, this manipulation offered very few alternatives and they all hinged on recognising that *sueña* was a verb form and it must take the preposition *con*. The simplest answer was *sueña con validar...*, although some admirable subjunctive versions were also submitted, for example, *sueña con que se validen...*

Question 3

The text was fairly accessible to candidates and few appeared to encounter difficulties in locating the information being sought. Most seemed to be aware that 'lifting' chunks of text for their answers would not score marks and there were many noteworthy attempts at paraphrase. Several candidates quite legitimately made use of the phrases offered for manipulation in the previous exercise.

- (a) Most candidates picked up a comfortable two marks here by successfully defining the 'baby test'. Only a few scored the third mark available for attempting to rephrase '*nombre casero*'. Among the better attempts at this were: *común, vulgar, no científico, informal* and *más conocido*.
- (b) The fact that other tests only measure the results whereas this test measures the processes seemed to be widely understood. As long as four consecutive words were not 'lifted' from the text in answering, then another two marks were readily available.
- (c) (i) Again, the reference material in the text proved easy to locate. A few candidates failed to pick up the maximum two marks available, with lack of elaboration on *razones orgánicas y socioambientales* being the principal cause.
- (ii) This question proved more of a challenge, requiring candidates to identify the causes of *retrasos* and to link them to all three social classes. Lack of attention amongst the upper classes was commonly noted although malnutrition amongst the poor was often not so clearly picked out. Premature birth among the middle classes was very frequently ignored.
- (d) As was to be expected, this question attracted a wide variety of answers. Provided that candidates did not panic when confronted by the perhaps unfamiliar word *hipoteca*, the idea behind the remark should have been reasonably accessible. Answers containing the idea that the authorities should act now to protect children for the future's sake collected both marks. A not uncommon misinterpretation was that more than half the children of Venezuela are malnourished.
- (e) Only a very few candidates successfully identified the three elements needed to pick up full marks for this question. If correctly paraphrased, 'all Venezuelan children should have the same opportunities' gave at least one mark. Only rarely did candidates note both the other elements: 'the test should be adopted as a measure of development' and 'the authorities should respond'.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The passages from the text needed to answer the questions were quickly identified by the majority of candidates. However, it should be remembered that if a question is worth five marks it is unlikely that a two line answer will suffice.

- (a) Most candidates correctly identified the increase in the number of caesarean operations although not so many claimed the extra mark by noting the declining birth rate in Spain or the recommendations of the WHO.
- (b) As long as the original text was successfully paraphrased, doctors' explanations were readily identified and many candidates scored well on this question.

