

SPANISH

Paper 1344/01
Speaking

Key messages

Candidates should:

- present their introduction “naturally”, even if pre-learnt.
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- provide evidence of research.
- show interest in and personal engagement with the topic.
- support opinions with evidence.
- avoid sweeping statements.

Candidates should also expect to:

- be interrupted.
- be asked to support statements.
- be asked unexpected questions.
- be asked about the sub-headings in a different order from that provided in the form.
- give examples.
- be stretched linguistically to their ceiling.

General comments

The general level of spoken Spanish was high. The majority of candidates were fluent enough to sustain a conversation easily, in spite of some common errors which are listed in the next section.

Most candidates had prepared their topics very thoroughly using a variety of sources. Examiners rewarded candidates highly for the quality of their research. When sound factual knowledge was combined with clear analysis and well-founded opinion, much higher marks were achieved. In many cases, candidates managed to convey a genuine interest in their chosen topic.

The discussions mostly flowed naturally, without an excessive use of recited, pre-learnt material. Candidates tended to respond readily to the Examiners' questions with suitable replies. Not only that, but they often tackled unexpected questions with great aplomb and honesty. Examiners rewarded highly this ability to engage in spontaneous conversation.

The very weakest performances, a small minority, did show a constricting reliance on recitation with a consequent lack of flexibility in discussion, and in these cases the candidates achieved lower marks even if they had researched their topics extensively.

Nervousness was evident in many candidates, but not to the point of detracting significantly from performance. Most candidates managed to relax after the first couple of minutes and were very keen to show their knowledge and express their opinions.

Specific comments

Topics

Most topics were well-suited to an 8-10 minute discussion, being neither too broad nor too narrow. There were 8 SC presentations, which related to History, Politics, Art, Sport and Social Issues. These were mostly familiar topics, for example Salvador Dalí or ETA, but some candidates had chosen to approach them in an

original or personal way. All those who went beyond the purely descriptive in order to provide some analysis or personal view were highly rewarded, as long as they supported their insights convincingly.

Similarly, presentations tended to produce excellent conversations when an element of controversy or debate was brought into it. The contentious aspect could be implicit in the title, or else introduced under one of the sub-headings.

Pronunciation

This was good overall and did not impair communication on the whole. These were among the most frequent errors:

- Pronunciation of *u* in words like *ataque, conquista guerra*.
- Anglicized initial vowels in words like *unidad, Europa, usar*.
- Soft *g* in words like *religion* or *legislar*.
- Voiced *s* in words like *decisión, desastre*.
- Stressing the wrong syllable: *democracia, Dalí, Gaudí*

It is advisable for candidates to put particular care into learning the pronunciation of words and names directly related to the topic they are presenting.

Grammar

- Failure to conform to gender and number agreements between noun and adjective.
- Wrong gender. Words like *problema, tema, país, situación* and *solución* suffered more than others.
- Confusion between *ser/estar/haber*.
- Conjugation errors: missed subjunctives, preterite for imperfect, wrong person ending.
- Incorrect use of *gustar*.
- Inability to distinguish between certain pairs of words: *nada/ningún, este/esto, bueno/bien, para/por*.
- Omission of *s* in the hundreds: **noveciento, *cuatrociento*.
- Use of cardinal instead of ordinal for kings and queens: *Carlos *tres, Fernando *ocho* instead of *tercero, octavo*.

Among the more glaring mistakes were the (very rare) unconjugated infinitives and some invented participles: **hacido, *ponido, *vido*.

Vocabulary

Some pairs of words were often confused:

- *Policía/política*
- *Peligroso/peligro*
- *Tiempo/hora*
- *Derechos/derechas*
- *Nombre/número*

Invented words were also used, one of the most frequent being *resulto*.

Candidates with a more sophisticated and specific vocabulary achieved higher marks in Range and Accuracy than those using the more general and common words, for example *llevar a cabo/realizar actividades nocivas/perjudiciales* against *hacer cosas malas*.

SPANISH

Paper 1344/02

Reading, Listening and Writing

General comments

This is the fourth year of the Cambridge Pre-U Spanish Short Course examination. The entry for this session was small, but it is hoped that the numbers will grow in the future. This report will, therefore, look at the performance in this year, but will also concentrate on giving advice and guidance for future examinations.

This is a mixed-skills paper which allows candidates to show their Spanish-language skills in Listening, Reading and Writing.

Part I – Listening (45 minutes)

In this section there are three recordings with listening comprehension questions in Spanish and in English. Language accuracy is not taken into account as long as it does not impede communication. Candidates hear the recordings three times and there are pauses both between and within the sections.

Listening Text 1 was an item about a technological innovation in Spain. Candidates were given a printed summary of the extract with five gaps left blank. Below the summary, they were offered a choice of three words to complete the sentences and had to underline the most appropriate option. The material was understood well by candidates and generally the correct options were chosen, although some candidates chose *inmediatamente* rather than *gradualmente* for **Question 3** or *cola* rather than *vanguardia* for **Question 5**. During the preparation for this type of question, it is essential that candidates should become confident in finding and using Spanish synonyms.

The extract for **Listening Text 2** was an interview with Juan, a young man who earns his living by standing as a human statue in a busy street in Málaga. The exercise, involving straightforward Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally done well. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. All the relevant information must be given but candidates are not required to answer in full sentences. The Examiners only mark what is correct. All irrelevant and superfluous information is disregarded, unless it adversely affects the correct target information. Most of the questions were understood and candidates wrote appropriate replies. For **Question 7**, candidates needed to give the complete information of *sus estudios como actor*. Some candidates misunderstood the information for **Question 8**, but most succeeded in identifying the two items *miedo* and *fascinados*. **Question 9** was generally understood well, whereas some candidates had difficulty in explaining the notion of *se pinta la cara* or *se pone maquillaje*. For **Question 11** there were two necessary responses: *cuando le dan dinero* and *cuando se le acerca un niño*. The answer *cada cinco minutos* was not correct. Most candidates succeeded in identifying the two elements of *paga la comida* and *paga el alquiler* for **Question 12**, but there was some evidence of transcribing without comprehension in an answer such as *apaga la kiler*.

In **Listening Text 3** candidates heard a report on obesity, produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The material certainly appeared to be accessible and candidates made a good attempt at answering the English questions set on it. Sometimes, however, rather than weak comprehension of the Spanish material, a candidate might have lost marks because of awkward English expression that did not convey the information correctly. Some of the questions required two pieces of information and candidates are urged to ensure that they have given all the information needed to gain the two marks. Most candidates answered **Questions 13, 14, 15** and **16** correctly, although there were some surprising statements that Paris was in Switzerland or the United States. For **Question 17** the answer “health problems” was not sufficient. The question required two responses from “health costs”, “shortened lives” or “wasted resources”. For **Question 19**, “ready-made” food was not considered to be an appropriate explanation of *comida rápida*. “Unhealthy food” or “junk food” is a more appropriate answer. A surprising number of candidate also mis-heard the figure of “75%” and wrote “65%” for **Question 21**. For **Question 23**

there had to be a link between the two groups of smokers and obese people and for **Question 24** there had to be some element of “Common strategy” or “collaboration”. Otherwise, the remaining questions were answered well.

Part II – Reading (45 minutes)

There were three passages with reading comprehension questions in Spanish and in English. Language accuracy is not taken into account as long as it does not impede communication.

Reading Text 1 was a short article about the re-opening of the tourist railway linking Cuzco and Machu Picchu in Peru, following the heavy rains a few months previously. The material was understood by the candidates and the exercise, involving Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally well done. For **Question 25** most candidates succeeded in changing the noun *desbordamiento* to a verb *se desbordó* or *destruyó parte de la vía férrea*. Some candidates misunderstood the date required to answer **Question 26**. Although the article referred to the rains of the previous January, it is in July that the tourist season really starts. For **Question 27** it was necessary to refer to the number of passengers using this train service and for **Question 28** it was necessary to explain what the trains had to do. Most candidates succeeded in using their own words in the answers. It is important to stress that, when answering these questions, candidates should aim to communicate a correct response, but should not reproduce the original text word for word.

The passage used for **Reading Text 2** was a longer article about recent trends of drug use amongst young Spaniards. The text had Spanish-language questions and answers set on it. Generally, the material was understood very well, although some candidates confused *descenso* with *descanso*. As for the first Reading task, it is essential that candidates should use their own words rather than attempt to reproduce the original text word for word. They must also ensure that they give the full information required to gain the marks available.

Reading Text 3 was an article about *La Tomatina*, a festival that takes place in the town of Buñol in the Valencia region of Spain. The material was generally well understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the passage in a fluent, comprehensible way. Most candidates succeeded in identifying the region of Spain involved and what happens during the festival. For **Question 37**, some candidates had difficulty explaining the word *altibajos* and others did not understand the role of the Town Council in the festival. Whilst most candidates answered **Questions 40** and **41** correctly, some understood *vestidos de blanco* to mean “wearing white vests”. For **Question 43** “wearing shoes” was not a sufficient answer; it was necessary to have “suitable footwear”. Similarly, simply “glasses” was not enough. “Protective glasses”, “diving masks” or “goggles” was needed to gain the second mark. Overall, however, most candidates succeeded in understanding the material.

Part III – Guided Writing (45 minutes)

Candidates were given a choice of two texts and had to write a response of 200-250 words in Spanish, based on a series of five bullet points. The material contained in the two extracts was clearly accessible to candidates and candidates succeeded in writing appropriate responses in a good level of fluent Spanish. The two options were equally popular and a variety of interesting essays were seen.

The first article discussed the findings of a recent report that 50% of the world’s population now live in cities. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to the article and discussing the differences between urban and rural life; then moving on to give their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of living in a big city and the main differences between the developed and developing worlds and, finally, they had to offer a conclusion as to whether there exists a solution to the problem of poverty in the world.

The second article discussed a new film called *Cobardes* which tackles the issue of School bullying. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to the article and giving their opinion as to the causes and consequences of bullying, then moving on to describing the situation of bullying in their own country and discussing whether cinema and films are a good vehicle to tackle such contemporary issues and finally they had to offer a conclusion as to whether there exists a solution to the amount of bullying in Schools today.

The response is marked according to the published marking grids. Firstly, the essay is marked for Content according to the task set and the bullet points, bearing in mind originality and development of ideas. Then the Quality of Language is assessed, taking into account both accuracy and variety of lexis and structure and

to what extent error impedes comprehension. Candidates are expected to use an acceptable formal letter format and to write within the word limits.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- Remember that full sentences are not required. However, the full information asked for must be given;
- highlight the question words (*¿quién?*, *¿cómo?*, *¿cuándo?*, etc.), so that it is clear what information is needed;
- note how many marks are awarded for each question, so that no essential information is omitted;
- try to use your own words and do not reproduce the language of the texts word for word;
- practise building a wide Spanish vocabulary, so that you are at ease using synonyms for words in the texts;
- remember that your Spanish answers must make sense. If they do not, then there is something wrong.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers in good English and check your spelling;
- beware of “false friends” (words that look alike in Spanish and English but have different meanings);
- realise that some Spanish words can often have two meanings; choose the correct one;
- find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the Spanish word;
- make sure your whole answer sounds like real English and makes sense to someone reading it;
- make sure that you give the full information required; do not omit any essential information;
- try to use your own words and not simply “lift” from the material in the passages.

Guided Writing

Covering the content

- Read the two stimulus passages and decide quickly which one you wish to tackle;
- pick the topic that most appeals to you and is most in accordance with your strengths;
- ensure that you have enough knowledge to tackle the question and enough vocabulary associated with the topic;
- read the chosen stimulus text again: analyse it to grasp the aim, content and context of the passage and to note key words and concepts;
- study the bullet points carefully and consider the full implications and scope of the requirements;
- pay attention to the form the response should take: (a letter? a report?);
- adopt the correct linguistic register: (formal? informal?);
- plan carefully and stick to your plan, avoiding digressions, getting carried away, recapitulation, putting in afterthoughts, etc.
- all the bullet point must be covered and developed, but not necessarily given equal weight;
- make sure that ideas follow a logical sequence, both overall and within each paragraph;
- avoid generalisations; make sure that ideas are illustrated and substantiated;
- take care to ensure full coverage of the content within the limits of the word count;
- develop the skill of communicating succinctly but effectively;
- leave enough time at the end to check your writing for accuracy.

The Spanish-language requirements for all the tasks

- Remember that essential basic grammar knowledge is required. You should aim to respond in accurate language;
- be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular;
- be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person;
- be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (e.g. *mi* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.);

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- use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses;
- be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (e.g. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.);
- know when accents are important (e.g. *trabajo* or *trabajó*? *esta*, *está* or *ésta*?);
- be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully;
- develop a bank of suitable phrases for your essay writing: how to begin (*para empezar*), making general statements (*hablando en forma general*), giving opinions (*me parece que*), explaining (*es decir*), disagreeing (*no estoy de acuerdo con*), giving justification (*no cabe duda de que*), expanding ideas (*no sólo... sino también*), contradicting (*a pesar de que*), suggesting (*es posible que*) and concluding (*en resumen*), etc. (NB. These are only suggestions and candidates should build up their own banks of phrases).