

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

Key messages

For candidates:

- candidates' own interests should play a part in choosing a subject for the Presentation. Clear reference should be made to Hispanic culture or society;
- it is important to structure the Presentation to fit into the allowed time, and to express not only facts, but also ideas and opinions;
- focus on the questions being asked and ensure your answer is wholly relevant;
- remember to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections.

For Centres:

- the test consists of three distinct sections: **(i)** a Presentation given by the candidate on his/her chosen topic lasting a maximum of 3½ minutes; **(ii)** Topic Conversation (7-8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation; **(iii)** General Conversation (8-9 minutes) on themes completely different from those covered in the Topic Conversation;
- each section should be clearly identified on the recordings, and the prescribed timings observed;
- candidates should be reminded if necessary to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections;
- interaction with the Examiner is an important criterion in both conversation sections.

General comments

Most Centres conducted the tests in accordance with the syllabus and instructions and made every effort to give candidates the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.

Most candidates had been well prepared for the examination. They were interested in the topics they had chosen and could speak for the required time.

Candidates generally had sufficient information to respond to questions in the Topic Conversation and offered ideas and opinions. Teachers conducting the test are reminded that they should prompt the candidate to ask questions if necessary. Most candidates were usually aware of the need to ask the Examiner at least one question but occasionally needed prompting to ask a second question. In some cases, however, these questions were of a rather general nature and had little real relevance to the issue actually being discussed.

The General Conversation section frequently proved more challenging, owing to the unseen nature of topics that can arise, and was variable in quality. Although many candidates responded well, some were less forthcoming and were more hesitant in this section, especially when dealing with ideas and opinions. There was a marked difference in candidates' ability to deal with expected (and well-rehearsed) questions and those which were unexpected.

Candidates were not always given the opportunity to respond at a sufficiently advanced level: some of the issues raised in the General Conversation were rather basic and did not provide adequate scope for the discussion and probing of ideas.

Most candidates remembered to ask the Examiner at least one question, but as in the Topic Conversation these sometimes seemed rather contrived and did not relate naturally to the matter being discussed.

There was considerable variation in the quality of language. In many cases accuracy was very good and candidates showed their willingness and ability to handle an advanced range of structures and vocabulary. On the other hand, some weaker candidates were hampered by faulty syntax and a lack of basic vocabulary. A simple *¿y tú?*, for example, cannot score highly for credit in seeking information and opinions. Many candidates, including those of otherwise quite a high standard, had difficulty in formulating questions.

The quality of pronunciation was generally acceptable. Problems with some more difficult sounds occasionally impeded ready communication. An over-reliance on prepared material sometimes led to flat or inaccurate intonation and stressing. Nevertheless, many candidates made real efforts to sound authentic.

Most Centres recorded the tests on CDs. There were a few problems and Centres are reminded that they must announce the candidate's name and number at the start of each test. The test of each candidate should be on a separate track or file.

It is important that the Working Mark Sheets are fully completed for all candidates – including those whose test may not have been submitted as part of the sample – and enclosed with the recordings. Centres' marks cannot be confirmed or moderated unless the full break down of marks is sent to Cambridge. Please also ensure that the samples submitted cover the whole range of marks awarded.

There were still some Centres that did not make a clear distinction between the Topic and General Conversations. The correct timings for each section must be observed. In some cases, candidates had insufficient opportunity to discuss a variety of issues or offer a suitable range of higher-level language. Marks cannot be awarded for a General Conversation if this has clearly not been conducted.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1: Presentation

Guidance on topic areas for the Presentation and the subsequent Topic Conversation is provided in the syllabus. Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture and it is important that candidates make this relevance explicit in their Presentation. The content mark out of ten is halved if a Hispanic focus is omitted.

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

Section 2: Topic Conversation

This part of the test should not just be an invitation to the candidate to give a further series of mini presentations. The Topic Conversation provides the opportunity to develop points arising from the Presentation. Interaction is a key criterion. Candidates whose responses were confined to pre-learned answers, with little evidence of spontaneity, could not be awarded high marks for Responsiveness. Candidates should actually take part in a discussion, including justifying or refuting a point of view, as well as giving relevant examples or information.

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

Section 3: General Conversation

This must be a separate section from the Topic Conversation and different issues should be discussed. Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, topics covered should be at an appropriate level. Common areas included current affairs, something in the news, the arts, sport, the environment, the economy, politics and social concerns. As long as items allowed scope for a sufficiently high level of discussion and language, almost any topic likely to spark a discussion was acceptable.

There were some cases of questioning at a level more appropriate to IGCSE or O Level. Although the conversation could start with some basic, personal or factual questions, candidates must be given the opportunity to move on to more complex issues and show they can give and justify opinions on more

advanced topics. All conversations should go beyond the descriptive. The range and style of questioning should allow candidates to show competence in structures at a suitably advanced level. Without this, candidates could not attain the higher mark ranges.

As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions and be reminded to do so if necessary. Questions should follow naturally in the course of the discussion and be phrased appropriately. Limited, all-purpose or rhetorical questions did not gain much credit.

Language

Quality of language is assessed in all sections. Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to use as wide a range of language as possible, and Examiners should ensure that candidates have the opportunity to do so. An appropriate level of vocabulary and structure is required.

To gain access to the higher ranges of the mark scheme, candidates needed to show competence in dealing with hypothetical and abstract situations as well as factual or descriptive areas. Accuracy was often lacking in basic structures such as numbers, verb endings and tenses, use of *ser/estar*, genders and noun/adjective/verb agreements.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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

General comments

The two texts dealing with different aspects of crime were accessible to most candidates, and comprehension was often clearly demonstrated. Most candidates attempted all questions, although there were occasional omissions in **Question 1**. All candidates appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions, and there were skilled attempts at paraphrase. Despite good, overall understanding, marks were lost when specific relevant details were not included in answers. Candidates should look at the number of marks allocated to each question, and gauge the amount of detail to be included accordingly. Only a very few candidates exceeded the 140-word limit in **Question 5**, thereby curtailing the number of marks they could score in **Question 5(b)**. There were too many vague generalisations in the summary for **Question 5(a)**, rather than specific details which answered the question.

Overall, the quality of Spanish language displayed by candidates was generally high, although there were frequent errors in spelling, and occasionally inappropriate register.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

This question appeared to cause some difficulties, with a number of candidates showing signs of unfamiliarity with what was required. As stated in the key messages above, candidates should seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question and take care not to omit words or include extra words.

A recommended approach is to copy out the paraphrase in the question before writing the answer on the line beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Questions (a) and (e) were generally answered well.

Instances of additional or omitted words which invalidated otherwise correct answers were most likely to be found in:

(b) – the answer was incorrectly prefaced by *De hecho...*

(c) – the addition of *...por delitos*

(d) – the omission of *se...*

Question 2

As in previous years, candidates generally found this question the most challenging on the paper. In some instances candidates added extra words to their answers and in others, candidates attempted to change the word(s) provided in brackets on the question paper which is not permitted.

In addition to performing the language manipulations required in this question, it is important to check that answers will fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. A line number reference is given for candidates to check quickly that this is the case. Adopting the recommended technique for **Question 1** of copying out the given phrase on one line, and then writing the manipulated phrase on the line beneath is a good way of ensuring accuracy.

- (a) Many used the subjunctive correctly, but errors often arose from attempts to incorporate *permitir* into answers and some missed the 'personal *a*'. Common mistakes included the omission of *los* or the use of the singular form *lo* for the direct complement.
- (b) This was generally tackled well. A number of candidates who started the answer well with *personas que tengan...*, had problems stating the age restriction correctly or using the correct preposition. Common mistakes were: *menor / menores de, menos que*.
- (c) Difficulties were often noted here in tense correlation, and the most common error was use of the preterite *fuleron* rather than the imperfect *eran castigadas*. The omission of *las* occasionally invalidated answers which were otherwise correct.
- (d) Finding a correct way to incorporate *cuenta* into the answer proved to be the most challenging of these questions. Most candidates appeared not to be aware of the expression *tener / tomar en cuenta*. Otherwise strong candidates often offered feasible alternatives such as *llevaban la cuenta* or *se daban cuenta* but as these would not fit back into the original text the mark could not be awarded.
- (e) Quite a good proportion of candidates answered this question correctly. A common mistake was the omission of *lo*. Others added *será* or *es*.

Question 3

The text about toughening up the law for pickpockets in Spain was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words usually achieved high marks. Some candidates lost marks when they copied more than four words directly from the text. A small minority of candidates wrongly thought that just one detail would be sufficient to answer each question, instead of being guided by the marks allocated which indicate how many pieces of information are being sought.

- (a) The majority of candidates mentioned that pickpockets could now go to prison, and referred to the introduction of the register, although they also needed to state that it would record both crimes and punishments. The final point proved to be the most elusive, with some candidates misinterpreting the text to mean that under-14s would be harshly dealt with by the law.
- (b) This was usually well answered although some candidates only included one of the two points required. Most candidates mentioned that pickpockets did not have a fixed home, however, some neglected to qualify this statement and establish that these were *la mayoría* or *muchos*, and not every pickpocket. Many candidates also mentioned the fact that the previous, ineffective punishment had been house arrest.
- (c) Most candidates provided satisfactory answers for at least two of the three points required to answer this question. A majority stated that thefts had been considered a minor offence/that only more serious crimes were recorded. Further success seemed to be fairly evenly split between the

other two points required: each crime was treated separately as the authorities did not take into account the other thefts; police had to set free *algunos carteristas bien famosos*.

- (d) Candidates frequently showed good understanding of the relevant paragraph in the text, but a number did not offer sufficient detail in their answers to score all the marks. A phrase which was commonly copied from the text was *registro de faltas y penas*. Most candidates noted the increased security, but not all mentioned *en el metro*. Similarly, many wrote about the continuous warnings, but not all said that they would be broadcast by *megafonía/altavoces*. The increased signage was also widely stated but there was frequent misunderstanding of the word *conurrencia*, often taken to mean 'high crime areas'.
- (e) This was generally answered well, with many candidates scoring at least two marks. Most mentioned the fact that Spain has the highest number of people in jail, although some did not make the necessary comparison with Europe. *La tasa de encarcelamiento más alta* was frequently copied from the text meaning that the mark couldn't be awarded. The fact that Spain has one of the lowest crime rates was frequently noted, as was the fact that *Correa* favoured alternatives to imprisonment. *Imponer penas alternativas a la cárcel* was another commonly copied phrase which invalidated this latter point. Some candidates tried to avoid this by changing one word in the phrase, proving unsuccessful in answers such as *penas alternativas en la cárcel*, which gave a different meaning.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with an upsurge in cases of fraud in Latin American countries, appeared to be well understood, with candidates often scoring slightly higher marks than for the previous question.

- (a) Many candidates scored two marks by stating that the economic crisis led to companies going bankrupt and also that it increased unemployment. To score the third mark it was necessary to stress that the economic crisis, rather than being the direct cause of cases of fraud, was instrumental in bringing such cases out into the open. Not so many candidates were able to make this distinction.
- (b) This was a very accessible question and high marks were often awarded if candidates avoided copying five or more words directly from the text. Almost all mentioned that the typical fraudster worked in finance or sales, although (*en*) *los departamentos de finanzas o ventas* was frequently copied from the text and therefore invalidated the response. Most candidates were able to state that the fraudster was trusted by the company, and more marks were available if the candidate added the typical length of service and ages without copying *entre tres y cinco años* or *entre los 36 y los 45 años*.
- (c) Most candidates were able to say that *no muchos pocos* cases get to court and many were able to score the second mark by stating that companies prefer not to talk about it.
- (d) Many candidates scored at least three marks by mentioning the fact that evidence needed to be gathered in order to dismiss the employee, and by adding that investigations had to be done *con discreción* and that the fraudster had to be interviewed more than once. The fact that investigators had to find the right moment or know when to produce the evidence proved a bit more challenging, but there were many instances of correct answers.
- (e) The choice between taking information and taking money appeared to be well understood, although some candidates lost the mark by saying that this was *más fácil* instead of *menos arriesgado*. This mark was also negated if *menos peligroso robar información que* was copied directly from the text. Full details were needed to score the second mark. Candidates who only vaguely noted that stolen information could be useful in the future, rather than in an *entrevista de trabajo*, did not score.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Most, but not all, candidates were aware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded by Examiners, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**.

- (a) This question generally produced low-scoring answers. Candidates who had achieved good or even excellent marks elsewhere on the paper frequently struggled to reach half marks here. Many wasted precious words by including elements from the texts, for example details about the typical fraudster's profile, which were irrelevant to the topic of *cómo se persigue a los criminales*.

As well as paying attention to the question being asked, candidates should also ensure they are familiar with the required technique, which may be very different from the technique which they have been encouraged to use in other forms of summary writing. For this task candidates should note, in the very limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks. Therefore answers beginning *Los dos textos se enfocan en aspectos distintos de la criminalidad. El primero habla sobre el robo de objetos personales en España mientras el segundo se enfoca en fraudes que pasan aun nivel empresarial...* waste thirty-four words, and score nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. By contrast, an answer which begins *A los carteristas se les penaliza con tiempo en la cárcel y se hacen registros de todos sus delitos. Se endurece la ley cuando organizaciones reclutan a jóvenes menores de 14 años...* scores three marks in fewer words by giving relevant specific details. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this last part of the examination the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers. Everybody had something to say about the amount, or occasionally the lack of crime in their country. Better answers included an opinion on why things were this way; fewer marks were awarded for mere lists of different categories of crime.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most marks in the Very Good or Good bands.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The two texts dealing with demographic changes in Latin America and Spain were accessible to most candidates, and comprehension was often clearly demonstrated. Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. There were skilled attempts at paraphrase. Despite good, overall understanding, marks were lost when specific relevant details were not included in answers. Candidates should look at the number of marks allocated to each question, and gauge the amount of detail to be included accordingly. Only a very few candidates exceeded the 140-word limit in **Question 5**, thereby curtailing the number of marks they could score in **Question 5(b)**. There were too many vague generalisations in the summary for **Question 5(a)**, rather than specific details which answered the question.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

As stated in the key messages above, candidates should seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question and take care not to omit words or to include extra words – a feature which often invalidated answers which were otherwise correct.

A recommended approach is to copy out the paraphrase in the question before writing the answer on the line beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Questions (a) and (b) were generally done well.

Instances of additional or omitted words which invalidated otherwise correct answers were most likely to be found in:

(c) - the answer was incorrectly prefaced by *son...*

(d) - the addition of *...entre*

(e) - the omission of ...*una cifra* or addition of ...*de*.

Question 2

As in previous years, candidates generally found this question the most challenging on the paper.

In addition to performing the language manipulations required, it is important to check that answers will fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. A line number reference is given for candidates to check quickly that this is the case. Adopting the recommended technique for **Question 1** of copying out the given phrase on one line, and then writing the manipulated phrase on the line beneath is a good way of ensuring accuracy.

- (a) There were a considerable number of ways to perform this manipulation, and many candidates were successful. A common pitfall was to use *pérdida* in such a way that required *visto* to be changed to *vista*. Candidates are not permitted to change the word(s) provided in brackets on the question paper.
- (b) Many candidates appeared to be aware that a subjunctive construction was required after *hace que* and again a number of different permutations were possible. It was important to remember that in order to fit back into the text the answer needed to end with *recursos*.
- (c) This was generally done quite well. The mark was lost if *es...* was used instead of *está...*, or if the subjunctive *encontremos* was offered.
- (d) A number of candidates appeared to be unaware that *cuenta con* is commonly used in Spanish as an alternative to *tiene*. This led to a number of unsuccessful attempts to use *cuenta* as a noun.
- (e) Quite a good proportion of candidates answered this question correctly. A common mistake was not using the infinitive after *suelen*.

Question 3

The text about emigration and urban population growth provided a fair level of challenge and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words usually achieved high marks. Some candidates lost marks when they copied more than four words directly from the text. A small minority of candidates wrongly thought that just one detail would be sufficient to answer each question, instead of being guided by the marks allocated, which indicate how many pieces of information are being sought.

- (a) Only a minority of candidates scored the maximum four marks. For the first point it was necessary to state that Latin America had the highest numbers of highly-qualified emigrants. The next two points, that this was a new phenomenon and that approximately one in ten well qualified people now lived abroad, were often clearly stated. The final point, that emigration of well-qualified people had now overtaken that of unqualified people, was sometimes overlooked.
- (b) This was usually very well answered with the majority of candidates scoring full marks for stating that emigration of this kind wasted resources which had been invested in education, and also held back a country's economic growth.
- (c) The details required to answer this question also appeared to have been well understood, and most candidates scored at least two out of the three marks. The point about problems of unemployment and emigration was occasionally invalidated when candidates directly copied the last five words from paragraph three in the text.
- (d) Most candidates scored two of the available four marks. There was some evidence of difficulty in comprehension in part (i) where there were a number of instances of directly copying five or more words of text, especially *la población se mantenga constante* and *personas en edad de trabajar*.

In part (ii) another phrase which was frequently copied was *a la de un país emergente*, and candidates also often had problems in differentiating between developed and less developed countries.

- (e) Differentiation between the effects of the population explosion on developed and less developed countries was again essential to score both marks. Many candidates scored one mark only for

mentioning the three challenges faced – *empleo, recursos, gente mayor* – without noting the type of country in which these were to be found.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with demographic change in Spain, appeared to be well understood, with candidates often scoring slightly higher marks than for the previous question.

- (a) This question caused a few difficulties. In addition to stating that the number of births had exceeded half a million, to score a mark it was necessary to add that this was in Spain. Problems were also encountered with attempts to paraphrase *encogerse por debajo*.
- (b) Candidates who had read the question carefully knew that they were expected to look for their answers in the words of *María Carbajosa*. Here it was clearly stated that, in her opinion, there were fewer Spanish women because fewer had been born in the 1980s, and that these tended to put their careers ahead of starting a family. Some candidates based their answer solely on the first sentence of the paragraph and therefore could not score.
- (c) In this question, worth four marks, and in the following one, worth five, most candidates attempted to include a sufficient amount of detail in their answers.

Almost everybody identified the economic crisis as being a factor contributing to the lower birth rate in Spain. Those candidates who went methodically through the paragraph were also successful in identifying the other three factors required by the mark scheme. Most candidates scored half marks or above.

- (d) The paragraph dealing with the contribution that immigrant mothers had made and continue to make to the birth rate in Spain appeared to be well understood, and high marks were often recorded for this question. In part (i), the fact that these mothers had made a significant contribution to increases in the past was commonly noted. A number of candidates did not score the second mark because they directly copied *el 20% de los nacimientos*. (It should be noted that changing *20%* to *veinte por ciento* is still considered as copying from the text).

In part (ii), most candidates correctly stated that the immigrants were now following the social trends of the host country, and also that they lacked assistance and support from other family members who were far away. More candidates did not include the point that this caused them to plan their families very carefully.

- (e) The majority of candidates scored at least one of the two marks available by stating that it was mostly the male immigrant who was likely to lose his job. Less success was achieved in adding that the consequence of this was that the female could therefore not risk giving up her job and starting a family.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Most, but not all, candidates were aware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded by Examiners, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**.

- (a) This question often produced low-scoring answers. Candidates who had achieved good or even excellent marks elsewhere on the paper frequently struggled to reach half marks here. The main problem was a tendency to give fairly broad generalisations and omit the key details needed to score the marks. Candidates had more success in extracting key details from the second text than from the first.

For this task the technique required for achieving a good mark is to note, in the very limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks. Therefore, answers beginning *En el primer*

*texto leímos sobre la emigración de los países de América Latina y cómo afecta los países desarrollados pero también esos con ingresos bajos. Se habla los problemas de empleos y los problemas económicos que América Latina tendrá que sufrir... use up forty-two words, and score nothing for such broad generalisations, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. By contrast, an answer which begins *En América Latina la emigración altamente cualificada ha sobrepasado a la no cualificada y un 11.3% de esta población vive en el extranjero. Hoy casi el 80% de la población latinoamericana vive en las ciudades...* scores three marks in fewer words by giving relevant specific details.*

Candidates should write concise statements of relevant facts in complete sentences – not bullet points, which are usually too short to show the clear meaning. They should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this last part of the examination the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers. Everybody had something to say about the ways in which society is changing in their country. The question provided ample opportunity to include ideas which had not already been suggested by the texts. Better answers included originality and an opinion on why these changes were occurring.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most marks in the Sound, Good, or Very Good bands.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The two texts dealing with demographic changes in Latin America and Spain were accessible to most candidates, and comprehension was often clearly demonstrated. Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. There were skilled attempts at paraphrase. Despite good, overall understanding, marks were lost when specific relevant details were not included in answers. Candidates should look at the number of marks allocated to each question, and gauge the amount of detail to be included accordingly. Only a very few candidates exceeded the 140-word limit in **Question 5**, thereby curtailing the number of marks they could score in **Question 5(b)**. There were too many vague generalisations in the summary for **Question 5(a)**, rather than specific details which answered the question.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

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- (a) There were a considerable number of ways to perform this manipulation, and many candidates were successful. A common pitfall was to use *pérdida* in such a way that required *visto* to be changed to *vista*. Candidates are not permitted to change the word(s) provided in brackets on the question paper.
- (b) Many candidates appeared to be aware that a subjunctive construction was required after *hace que* and again a number of different permutations were possible. It was important to remember that in order to fit back into the text the answer needed to end with *recursos*.
- (c) This was generally done quite well. The mark was lost if *es...* was used instead of *está...*, or if the subjunctive *encontremos* was offered.
- (d) A number of candidates appeared to be unaware that *cuenta con* is commonly used in Spanish as an alternative to *tiene*. This led to a number of unsuccessful attempts to use *cuenta* as a noun.
- (e) Quite a good proportion of candidates answered this question correctly. A common mistake was not using the infinitive after *suelen*.

Question 3

The text about emigration and urban population growth provided a fair level of challenge and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words usually achieved high marks. Some candidates lost marks when they copied more than four words directly from the text. A small minority of candidates wrongly thought that just one detail would be sufficient to answer each question, instead of being guided by the marks allocated, which indicate how many pieces of information are being sought.

- (a) Only a minority of candidates scored the maximum four marks. For the first point it was necessary to state that Latin America had the highest numbers of highly-qualified emigrants. The next two points, that this was a new phenomenon and that approximately one in ten well qualified people now lived abroad, were often clearly stated. The final point, that emigration of well-qualified people had now overtaken that of unqualified people, was sometimes overlooked.
- (b) This was usually very well answered with the majority of candidates scoring full marks for stating that emigration of this kind wasted resources which had been invested in education, and also held back a country's economic growth.
- (c) The details required to answer this question also appeared to have been well understood, and most candidates scored at least two out of the three marks. The point about problems of unemployment and emigration was occasionally invalidated when candidates directly copied the last five words from paragraph three in the text.
- (d) Most candidates scored two of the available four marks. There was some evidence of difficulty in comprehension in part (i) where there were a number of instances of directly copying five or more words of text, especially *la población se mantenga constante* and *personas en edad de trabajar*.

In part (ii) another phrase which was frequently copied was *a la de un país emergente*, and candidates also often had problems in differentiating between developed and less developed countries.

- (e) Differentiation between the effects of the population explosion on developed and less developed countries was again essential to score both marks. Many candidates scored one mark only for

mentioning the three challenges faced – *empleo, recursos, gente mayor* – without noting the type of country in which these were to be found.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with demographic change in Spain, appeared to be well understood, with candidates often scoring slightly higher marks than for the previous question.

- (a) This question caused a few difficulties. In addition to stating that the number of births had exceeded half a million, to score a mark it was necessary to add that this was in Spain. Problems were also encountered with attempts to paraphrase *encogerse por debajo*.
- (b) Candidates who had read the question carefully knew that they were expected to look for their answers in the words of *María Carbajosa*. Here it was clearly stated that, in her opinion, there were fewer Spanish women because fewer had been born in the 1980s, and that these tended to put their careers ahead of starting a family. Some candidates based their answer solely on the first sentence of the paragraph and therefore could not score.
- (c) In this question, worth four marks, and in the following one, worth five, most candidates attempted to include a sufficient amount of detail in their answers.

Almost everybody identified the economic crisis as being a factor contributing to the lower birth rate in Spain. Those candidates who went methodically through the paragraph were also successful in identifying the other three factors required by the mark scheme. Most candidates scored half marks or above.

- (d) The paragraph dealing with the contribution that immigrant mothers had made and continue to make to the birth rate in Spain appeared to be well understood, and high marks were often recorded for this question. In part (i), the fact that these mothers had made a significant contribution to increases in the past was commonly noted. A number of candidates did not score the second mark because they directly copied *el 20% de los nacimientos*. (It should be noted that changing *20%* to *veinte por ciento* is still considered as copying from the text).

In part (ii), most candidates correctly stated that the immigrants were now following the social trends of the host country, and also that they lacked assistance and support from other family members who were far away. More candidates did not include the point that this caused them to plan their families very carefully.

- (e) The majority of candidates scored at least one of the two marks available by stating that it was mostly the male immigrant who was likely to lose his job. Less success was achieved in adding that the consequence of this was that the female could therefore not risk giving up her job and starting a family.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Most, but not all, candidates were aware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded by Examiners, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**.

- (a) This question often produced low-scoring answers. Candidates who had achieved good or even excellent marks elsewhere on the paper frequently struggled to reach half marks here. The main problem was a tendency to give fairly broad generalisations and omit the key details needed to score the marks. Candidates had more success in extracting key details from the second text than from the first.

For this task the technique required for achieving a good mark is to note, in the very limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks. Therefore, answers beginning *En el primer*

*texto leímos sobre la emigración de los países de América Latina y cómo afecta los países desarrollados pero también esos con ingresos bajos. Se habla los problemas de empleos y los problemas económicos que América Latina tendrá que sufrir... use up forty-two words, and score nothing for such broad generalisations, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. By contrast, an answer which begins *En América Latina la emigración altamente cualificada ha sobrepasado a la no cualificada y un 11.3% de esta población vive en el extranjero. Hoy casi el 80% de la población latinoamericana vive en las ciudades...* scores three marks in fewer words by giving relevant specific details.*

Candidates should write concise statements of relevant facts in complete sentences – not bullet points, which are usually too short to show the clear meaning. They should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this last part of the examination the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers. Everybody had something to say about the ways in which society is changing in their country. The question provided ample opportunity to include ideas which had not already been suggested by the texts. Better answers included originality and an opinion on why these changes were occurring.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most marks in the Sound, Good, or Very Good bands.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31

Essay

Key messages

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

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

General comments

The best essays were easy to read, articulately constructed, relevant to the title set and displayed a confident use of complex sentence patterns when necessary, as well as a good sense of idiom. The maturity of thought and the linguistic accuracy and range in many of these essays was impressive. Many candidates prepared an essay plan and whilst this is not at all obligatory (and will not be assessed) it undoubtedly helps candidates to keep an eye on their essay construction and overall content.

There were many examples of essays which would have benefited from greater attention to the structure. Candidates should also ensure that they address the title that has been set and do not simply write an essay on the general topic area. Many candidates appear to rely on pre-learnt paragraphs based loosely around the topic in the hope that this will meet the requirements of the question. Candidates are advised to keep the title in mind throughout the essay and ensure that they respond directly to it. Structural problems and issues relating to relevance together with a limited ability to apply the very basic rules of Spanish grammar were features of the weakest essays.

There were some essays in which the word count was not observed. Some essays were short of the 250-word minimum stipulated in the rubric whilst others were well in excess of the 400-word maximum. Such essays are unlikely to gain access to the higher marks in the mark scheme both in terms of content and language. Short essays are often poorly structured and very limited in their response to the actual title set. Overly long essays equally lack the structural rigour needed to deal with the title in 250 – 400 words and there is more chance candidates will make linguistic errors or run out of time to check their work. There is no need for candidates to state the number of words actually used at the end of the essay.

In terms of the language used by candidates in their essays, the overall quality of Spanish was often very good indeed. The majority of candidates clearly understood the importance of detailed preparation of the topics to be used for this paper and the best essays employed a well-researched range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic being discussed. The depth of knowledge in all topic areas was very good. However, even some of the very best essays showed evidence of a lack of checking which almost always leads to needless errors, often extremely basic in their nature, being made. It is essential that candidates leave time at the end of the examination to check what they have written.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- the confident and well-practised use of a range of different tenses;
- appropriate use of the passive voice;
- good understanding of the rules governing adjectival agreement in Spanish;
- singular subjects taking singular verbs;
- plural subjects taking plural verbs;
- the avoidance of mother-tongue influence on sentence structures;

- the correct use of Spanish accents.

Common errors included:

- confusion with the use of past and present participles;
- misunderstanding of the differences between *hay* and *es/tiene*;
- names of countries having an initial lower case letter;
- dropping the letter 'h' when using the perfect tense (e.g. *el gobierno no a ofrecido una solución*);
- basic spelling errors such as *el probleme*, *la pollución* and *la tecnología*;
- the use of the verb *estar* in passive sentences (e.g. *la contaminación estuvo reducida por los países europeos...*);
- the use of *gustar* with the reflexive pronoun (e.g. *Se gusta el tiempo libre...*);
- confusion with regard to the use of *ser* and *estar*;
- confusion between the use of the letter 's' and the letter 'z'.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a very popular title with candidates. There was a general consensus that most parents do indeed worry unduly about the company that their sons and daughters keep. However, most essays suggested that this parental concern is often well founded. The negative influence that some friends can have was accepted by the vast majority of those who chose to respond to this title. Honesty and openness between parents and children was, for many, the key to a happy adolescence.

Question 2

This was a reasonably popular title. There were plenty of convincing essays arguing that there is a world of difference between living in the city and living in the country. Transport, cultural activities and proximity of friends and family were offered as the main advantages to city life although everybody clearly understood the appeal of the tranquility of life in rural areas. Most essays argued that city life is more interesting than life in the country.

Question 3

This was also a reasonably popular title with candidates. Responses were generally very good and ranged in terms of content from the insistence that free time should be used exclusively to relax right through to the belief that an individual's character can only benefit from a wide range of energetic activities such as mountaineering, surfing and foreign travel. Most essays were convincingly argued and showed a genuine understanding of the issues relating to leisure time.

Question 4

This was a slightly less popular title with candidates. The main conclusion reached by those candidates who responded was that human values are indeed radically altered by the onset of war. A few essays, however, suggested that war can often bring people closer in terms of cooperation and teamwork when faced with difficult circumstances.

Question 5

This was another reasonably popular title on the paper. Essays tended to argue that reducing environmental pollution is absolutely essential to the future prosperity of the planet but that it is not always that straightforward when considered alongside the importance of industrial progress. Some essays suggested that governments should introduce more fines for companies which exceed agreed pollution levels. A small number of essays argued that the effects of industrial activity on the environment are often exaggerated and so we should carry on as we are. A few went on to point out that only time will tell if the planet can survive faced with our current levels of atmospheric pollution.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32

Essay

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- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

The best essays were easy to read, articulately constructed, relevant to the title set and displayed a confident use of complex sentence patterns when necessary, as well as a good sense of idiom. The maturity of thought and the linguistic accuracy and range in many of these essays was impressive. Many candidates prepared an essay plan and whilst this is not at all obligatory (and will not be assessed) it undoubtedly helps candidates to keep an eye on their essay construction and overall content.

There were many examples of essays which would have benefited from greater attention to the structure. Candidates should also ensure that they address the title that has been set and do not simply write an essay on the general topic area. Many candidates appear to rely on pre-learnt paragraphs based loosely around the topic in the hope that this will meet the requirements of the question. Candidates are advised to keep the title in mind throughout the essay and ensure that they respond directly to it. Structural problems and issues relating to relevance together with a limited ability to apply the very basic rules of Spanish grammar were features of the weakest essays.

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In terms of the language used by candidates in their essays, the overall quality of Spanish was often very good indeed. The majority of candidates clearly understood the importance of detailed preparation of the topics to be used for this paper and the best essays employed a well-researched range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic being discussed. The depth of knowledge in all topic areas was very good. However, even some of the very best essays showed evidence of a lack of checking which almost always leads to needless errors, often extremely basic in their nature, being made. It is essential that candidates leave time at the end of the examination to check what they have written.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a very popular title with candidates. The popularity of social media websites was mentioned by most as being one of the main reasons nowadays why making friends is indeed easier than it used to be. Many went on to explore the nature of 'real' and 'virtual' friendships. There was also universal agreement that there is no real substitute for physical contact and actually talking face-to-face with friends as opposed to over the Internet. A few essays also mentioned the possibility that some people have lost their innate ability to make friends 'in person' because of the influence of social media websites and the ease with which one can 'add a friend' with the simple click of a button.

Question 2

This was a reasonably popular title on the paper. The general feeling seemed to be that, in general terms, country dwellers do tend to exaggerate the difficulties involved with living in the country. Many essays showed some degree of sympathy with the view that life in the country can be particularly difficult in adverse weather conditions but that, on the whole, the peaceful nature of existence in the country was very much an advantage in today's fast-paced, largely city-dwelling society. Many candidates pointed out that city life also has its disadvantages.

Question 3

This was also a reasonably popular title with candidates. The idea that relaxation is the key to leisure time resonated with many candidates. The pressures of holding down a job or studying full time were quoted as the main reasons for the need to take things easy when enjoying free time. Many essays went on to suggest that strenuous physical activity (e.g. sporting activities) can, for some people, be very relaxing as well.

Question 4

This was a slightly less popular title with candidates. Those who did respond were largely in agreement with the title. Many spoke of the inevitability of conflict when one is dealing with, for example, a dictatorship or the denial of basic human rights. However, the general feeling was that war should only ever be the last resort.

Question 5

This was another reasonably popular title on the paper. Most essays stated categorically that we all stand to benefit from industrial progress but that we should also be mindful of the environmental impact of, for example, excess pollution from a wide range of manufacturing processes and the destruction of natural habitats for animals and insects. The need for governments to regulate the levels of pollution was also clearly stated in most of the essays.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33

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