

SPANISH LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 8685/01 Speaking</p>

Key messages

For candidates:

- Candidates' own interests should play a part in the choice of the 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 ideas and opinions.
- Focus on the questions asked and be sure to answer what is asked.
- Remember to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections

For Centres:

- The test consists of three distinct sections:
 - **Section 1** Initial presentation (maximum 3 1/2 minutes);
 - **Section 2** Topic Conversation (7–8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation;
 - **Section 3** General Conversation (8–9 minutes) on themes complete different from those raised 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 and be reminded to do so, if necessary. The Examiner's replies to such questions should be concise – it is the candidate and not the Examiner who is being marked.
- Interaction with the Examiner is an important criterion in both conversation sections.

General comments

The performance of candidates was good overall but varied considerably, from the outstanding to the very basic. Some very good candidates were clearly native or near-native speakers, but at the lower range some candidates struggled to reach the required standard.

Times were generally in accordance with those prescribed in the syllabus, but there were some cases of timings being under or over the limits. Centres should remember that no credit can be awarded for performance outside the maximum time allowed for the test; conversely, candidates whose timings were short were unlikely to have had access to the full range of marks.

Presentations must be clearly related to a Spanish-speaking country or context. Where this is not the case, the maximum mark for content is halved. In a few tests, the Presentation was not related to any Spanish-speaking country.

The range of samples followed correct procedure; some centres even supplied recordings of all candidates entered. Samples must include tests at the highest and lowest marks awarded. Please note that the working mark sheets of all candidates, not just those in the sample, must be included with the recordings. Most centres carried out the necessary administration efficiently and correctly. However an increased number of centres this series had to have their marks amended because of arithmetical errors, or through

errors in transcribing marks to the final mark sheet. Centres are reminded of their responsibility to ensure accuracy in recording marks. Please remember that failure to include the required documentation, or lateness in submitting the required materials, inevitably leads to delay in the moderation process and the issuing of results, and can mean that the centre's own marks cannot be confirmed.

Quality of language (range and accuracy) is assessed in all sections. Centres are again reminded to encourage candidates to use as wide a range of language – vocabulary and syntax – as possible.

To access 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 áreas.

Grammatically, the usual stumbling blocks were noted, included the mishandling of *ser/estar*, poor use of tenses, incorrect gender of some very basic nouns (*una tema, una problema, el ciudad*), unnecessary repetition of *ellos/ellas* in front of third-person plural verbs, plural verbs with singular subjects such as *la gente*, manipulation of *gustar*, and many missed opportunities regarding the use of the subjunctive.

Anglicised Spanish was not uncommon. A few candidates resorted to English to fill a gap when a lexical item could not be recalled in Spanish. Words were sometimes made up on the spot: *problamente, el governmento, problemas, el resultado*.

Quality of pronunciation varied considerably. Incorrect stressing or poor intonation occurred when candidates mentally recited prepared answers or rushed through the Presentation. Many candidates, however, took care to communicate clearly and made real efforts to sound authentic in pronunciation and intonation.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1: Topic Presentation

Guidance on topic areas for the Presentation and discussion may be found in the syllabus. Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture and it is important that candidates make this relevance clear.

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.

A weakness with some topics – apart from a failure to focus on Hispanic themes – was a lack of depth, with candidates giving a recitation of a list of (for example) food, fiestas or football teams, but with little cohesion or evidence of organisation. Other candidates chose well-balanced topics that were full of information, facts and statistics, dealing with issues of the day, including politics, racism, gender equality, sexual harassment in the workplace, etc., and that offered opinions and ideas, providing good scope for further discussion.

Part 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, though a few centres were content to allow this. Candidates should actually take part in a discussion, including justifying or refuting a point of view, as well as giving relevant examples or information. The Topic Conversation section 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 ask the Examiner at least two substantial questions. Marks could not be awarded for 'seeking information and opinions' where no questions were asked by the candidate. Some centres awarded high marks for this, even when candidates asked no such questions, perhaps thinking erroneously that, because the Examiner offered his or her opinion without being asked, this would suffice.

Part 3: General Conversation

This must be a separate section from the Topic Conversation and the start of this section should be clearly announced on the recording.

It is important to address issues different from those discussed in in **Part 2**: it is not acceptable to re-visit or continue the Topic Conversation. No marks can be awarded for the General Conversation if this does not take place.

Issues covered should be at an appropriate level. Common areas included current affairs, news items, the arts, sport, education, the environment, the economy, politics and social concerns. Although the conversation could start with some basic, personal or factual questions, candidates must be encouraged to deal with more complex issues and have the opportunity to 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 invite and allow candidates to use more sophisticated language when relevant, both in register and structure. There were still some centres that did not challenge candidates sufficiently for this level: questions probing no further than, for example, what is the candidate's favourite colour, or what pets do they have, or how old is a brother and sister, did not suffice. It was noticeable that centres' assessment for this part of the test was frequently generous.

As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the Examiner questions, and be prompted to do so, if necessary. This requirement was not always met.

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 to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit 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, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The level of challenge of this summer's paper was appropriate and the spread of marks awarded reflected the varying levels of ability of candidates. Scripts were generally well presented, and response to the two texts dealing with migration was pleasing with comprehension often clearly demonstrated. All scripts were generally well presented and there was only occasional evidence of difficulty with time management.

There were a number of candidates who chose to offer few or even no answers to **Questions 1 and 2** but then went on to do well in **Questions 3, 4 and 5**. This would seem to indicate that they had received little training in the exam technique for these questions nor done any past-paper practice.

In their answers to the comprehension questions most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. On occasions, good candidates did not pick up all the marks available when they answered too generally and omitted relevant details. Candidates should note the marks allocated to each question, as this is a good indication of the number of details being sought.

A number of candidates still exceeded the 140 word limit in **Question 5**, thus reducing the number of marks they could score in **5(b)**. In **5(a)** a number of candidates wrote in general terms about migration and hardly included any examples from the two texts. However, on the whole, these summaries are improving as the message seems to be getting through that relevant specific details taken from the texts score many more marks than vague generalisations.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

As stated in the Key Message 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) Most candidates identified the correct expression from the first paragraph of the text. Some candidates omitted *la* from the beginning of the transcription.
- (b) Most candidates identified the correct expression, but some answers were invalidated when prefaced by *con...*
- (c) As above, most were correct, but some invalidated when prefaced by *a...*
- (d) Candidates had some difficulty finding this in the text, and some who did find the relevant section began incorrectly with *ahora...* Others thought incorrectly that the equivalent of *tras volver a su pueblo* was *si regresas como yo* instead of *de nuevo en su comunidad*.
- (e) This caused many candidates difficulty. Some did not identify the need to include *apenas...*

Question 2

This was a more demanding exercise, although a number of good candidates still scored maximum or near maximum marks.

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 would be the case.

It is not necessary to change any of the other vocabulary not affected by the manipulation.

- (a) Candidates who realised that if they used *umentarse* instead of *umento* the resulting phrase would no longer fit back in the text to be followed by *...del 150%* were usually successful. However, the correct spelling of either the subjunctive or future form of *hay* proved to a challenge for some.
- (b) This was generally done well although some marks were lost when *resulta* was misinterpreted as a noun. A number of candidates changed the phrase to *resulta que todo esto es una fuerte emigración* which, although good Spanish, does not fit back into the original text with the same meaning.
- (c) A surprising number of candidates, many with a Hispanic background, appeared to be unaware that *por* is the preposition which follows *optar*. Many answers either contained the wrong preposition *a* or used no preposition at all.
- (d) This was answered well by many candidates who correctly inserted the infinitive *viajar* after *solían*. A number still unnecessarily retained *por lo general*, although this was not penalised. At times the mark was lost, either when *los* was added, which would change the meaning of the original text, or *que* was omitted. Also, some candidates either missed out *viajar*, or conjugated this as the main verb.
- (e) This was answered well by most candidates who correctly identified the need for *a/* plus the verb in the infinitive.

Question 3

The text about *hondureños* migrating and then emigrating was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved good marks. A few candidates lost marks when they copied five or more words directly from the text. A small minority disregarded the reference given to the paragraph where the information for each specific question was to be found.

Marks were sometimes lost here, and also in **Questions 4 and 5**, candidates confused the terms *migración*, *inmigración* and *emigración*.

- (a) This was a challenging question and needed careful attention to details of dates. Most candidates were able to grasp general trends, which was pleasing. A number of candidates muddled the chronology and incorrectly assumed that Hurricane Mitch occurred in 1990. The strongest candidates clearly expressed the scale of migration currently, including the fact that 90,000 Hondurans emigrate each year. Those who overlooked the significance of *hasta ahora* in the question went on unnecessarily to include details of future trends.
- (b) Most candidates were able to grasp some of the causes of the migratory movements, but few were successful in noting all four. The facts of rising unemployment and street crime were identified by most candidates, as was the lack of support for agriculture, but only the strongest candidates could clearly express the link between falling coffee exports and migration. Sometimes the mark could not be awarded as answers which would have otherwise been correct contained five or more words lifted directly from the text e.g. *la falta de ayudas gubernamentales* or *la exportación del café hondureño*.
- (c) Answers to this question required careful reading of the relevant paragraph. Most candidates scored at least one mark by noting either Carlos's desire to escape poverty and to make money quickly and easily, but not so many added that his motive for this was to it send to his family.
- (d) This question was well answered by the majority of candidates who identified the abuse of women and their low salaries, but fewer candidates specified exactly when women suffered discrimination. For this latter point a number appeared uncertain of the meaning of *cuando ya no son económicamente activas* and either lifted it directly from the text or focused incorrectly on a misinterpretation of *objeto*, stating that women were treated like objects in general.
- (e) This question proved to be a good discriminator requiring good use of tenses to answer, with only a minority gaining the full three marks. There were some good answers in terms of ideas of investment and increases in jobs and reducing migration. The strongest candidates were able to avoid lifting from the text by intelligently manipulating the source text, but some less able candidates lifted the ideas of *las inversiones en infraestructuras nacionales*, which could not thus be credited.

Section 2

Question 4

The second text, about emigration from Spain, proved to be more of a challenge.

- (a) This question required precise answers and accurate reading of vocabulary such as *aumento*, *incremento*, *igualar*, *menos de* and *con respecto a*. Those candidates who did not show accurate comprehension of the significance of the percentages given, and offered generic answers regarding the high level of emigration, did not score marks. The best performers correctly identified how the percentages linked to trends and when they referred to. Many candidates showed that they understood the information given about the percentage of those returning and were able to pick up at least one mark.
- (b) Candidates generally did well on this four mark question and scores of at least three were commonly recorded. A number struggled with expressing 'jobs matching her qualifications' and surprisingly few were able to show understanding of *bien remunerado* or express it in their own words. A common lift was *la ciencia en otros países*.
- (c) This was another question that depended on accurate expression of numbers and time frames. Many candidates identified the general trend, but some struggled to express clearly the idea of exactly when, and to what extent, the Spanish population was decreasing to half its size. Only the strongest candidates communicated clearly the contribution immigrants are making to the population size and how the reduction in number leaving is mitigating the problem. These last two points were sometimes wrongly generalised as *la población foránea es estable*.

- (d) This question was one of the better answered in this section with most candidates realising that more detail was needed in their answers than the unspecific *problemas económicos y políticos*. The idea of problems paying pensions was generally expressed well, as indeed was the idea of reduced influence in Europe, provided that lifts such as *pérdida de protagonismo en el mapa europeo* or *representación en las instituciones de la Unión Europea* were avoided.
- (e) The majority of candidates scored some marks here and, provided that they did not confuse *inmigración* and *emigración*, most were able to express the idea of needing more young people to immigrate. The need to reduce high unemployment was well expressed by those able to tease out the meaning of *dejen de registrarse las cifras de paro tan escandalosas*. Less success was achieved with the final point with many candidates unable to pinpoint the answer *incentivar con ayudas a la familia* and giving a generalised answer of increasing the number of children.

Question 5

Many candidates now appear to be aware of the techniques required for this part of the examination. The vast majority paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. More summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas. In their free-writing, many were able to write more accurately than in **Questions 3 and 4**.

- (a) There were clear differences here in scores between those who had practised this summary question, and those who were not used to the demands of the test. Some candidates had been well-prepared and selected their answers from the texts very precisely, usually achieving greater success in extracting relevant details from Text 1 rather than from Text 2. Many, though, did not answer the question and used up precious words in enumerating the possible solutions to the problems of immigration, rather than the causes and consequences. A small number of candidates wrote in general terms about migration and did not include examples from the two texts.

Highest scores were achieved by those who wrote short summaries of the key ideas in the texts, such as this:

Algunas causas de los movimientos migratorios son la pobreza, ✓ el desempleo, ✓ el crimen callejero, ✓ la falta de programas del gobierno para ayudar la agricultura ✓ y desastres naturales. ✓ La migración trae consecuencias, algunas de ellas son la disminución de salarios para las mujeres ✓ la discriminación ✓...

The start of this answer has scored seven marks in just over forty words.

This contrasts with scores attained by more generalised answers, such as:

En el texto 1 se habla del cruce de fronteras de Honduras a Estados Unidos debido a condiciones de pobreza extrema ✓ en ese país, ya que no poseen ayuda económica por parte de países extranjeros. En el texto 2 se habla de la necesidad de inmigrantes para el aumento de población y mejoras demográficas del país...

This answer uses more words to score considerably fewer marks.

- (b) Many candidates scored high marks, particularly those who brought a new idea to the table, rather than relying on ideas rehashed from the source texts. Most addressed the question correctly and candidates who were less able linguistically often offered some very good answers. Some less relevant answers did not go much beyond mentioning the scale of immigration to their country, or emigration from it. Better answers included mentioning the political or economic situation that led to these changes, or included reference to changing birth rates.

Quality of Language

The quality of most candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks were usually in the Sound to Good or Very Good range.

Strong candidates could correctly manipulate the source texts into excellent Spanish to display clear comprehension. Less able candidates often had difficulties with verb formation, and particularly the use of the singular or plural verb forms. The majority of candidates were of a Hispanic background and, despite

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misspellings, (particularly *v* for *b*, or vice versa, *y* for *ll*, and *c* for *s*), omission of accents and an abundance of anglicisms, generally produced answers in a good level of written Spanish.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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

General comments

The challenge of this summer's paper was appropriate and the spread of marks awarded reflected the varying levels of ability of candidates. All scripts were generally well presented and response to the two texts dealing with changes to working practices was pleasing, with comprehension often clearly demonstrated. All scripts were generally well presented and there appeared to be little evidence of difficulty with time management.

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. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. On occasions candidates answered too generally and omitted relevant detail, therefore not achieving full marks. Candidates should note the marks allocated to each question, as this is a good indication of the number of details being sought.

A few candidates still exceeded the 140 word limit in **Question 5**, thus reducing the number of marks they could score in **5(b)**. Summaries in **5(a)** are improving as the message seems to be getting through that relevant specific details score many more marks than vague generalisations.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

As stated in the Key message 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), (b) and (e) were almost universally answered correctly.

(c) provided a little more difficulty in locating the correct phrase.

(d) was invalidated when otherwise correct answers were prefaced by *para*.

Question 2

This was a more demanding exercise, although a number of good candidates still scored maximum or near maximum marks.

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 would be the case.

(a) There was some confusion over where to place *sin que* – *sin que nos importe* / *sin que desarrollen la actividad*. In general candidates managed the subjunctive very competently. A number successfully reversed the order, placing *sin que* in the middle – *pueden desarrollar su actividad sin que nos importe el lugar* – which worked well, provided that *el lugar* / *donde* was added at the end. Sometimes *sin que (nos) importe* was replaced very acceptably by *sin que tenga importancia*.

(b) This was done very well, especially by native speakers. A small number of candidates attempted to change the cue *encarga* to *encargado* which, regardless of whether correct Spanish is produced, is not permitted.

(c) The main mistake was using the subjunctive in the past – *hayan encontrado* / *fuese encontrado* – which, unless it was used as in *para que los usuarios que no hayan encontrado Cromol pueden hacerlo*, did not work. Some candidates who had successfully answered *para que Cromol sea encontrado* missed the mark by neglecting to add *por los usuarios*.

(d) Non-native candidates found some difficulty with this structure, often trying to add *hacía* or an imperfect with *trabajar*. A few candidates did not appreciate the meaning of the phrase in its context and incorrectly offered *sin trabajar* instead of *trabajando*.

(e) As long as *mensualmente* was understood candidates had little difficulty in coming up with *una vez al / por mes*. Those who were not familiar with or who overlooked its meaning offered a number of other constructions using *vez* – *cada vez* / *de vez en cuando*, etc. – which were inappropriate here.

Question 3

The text about using technology to work at distance was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved good marks. A few candidates lost marks when they copied five or more words directly from the text. A small minority disregarded the reference given to the paragraph where the information for each specific question was to be found.

(a) The first two points – that nowadays people can work when and where they like – were clearly understood by the vast majority of candidates. Occasionally the second mark was invalidated if it incorporated the five word lift *pueden trabajar con un portátil*. The third point, that workers are measured by their output, was frequently overlooked.

- (b) This was another question which was generally answered well and many candidates scored maximum marks. Although the text was understood, a few candidates did not fully appreciate the question – *¿Cómo ha usado Bernal la tecnología...?* The answers needed to mention *videoconferencia / internet / red / en línea / aplicaciones*, etc. and these references were sometimes left out.
- (c) Candidates had a choice of four from five possible disadvantages of working from distance, although the inconvenience of travelling to see the boss was not mentioned that often. Two very common lifts were *de la comunicación no verbal* and especially *(transmitir) la cultura de la empresa*. The notion of ‘non-verbal communication’ did not appear to be fully understood or, if it was, candidates were often at a loss as to how to rephrase it. The ‘non’ was frequently omitted, giving the idea that the details were lost because employees communicated via internet. For the final point, the idea of ‘after work’ or ‘with colleagues’ was sometimes not mentioned.
- (d) This was a fairly straightforward question to answer, although some candidates focused solely on the spoken words and tried to make two points out of what was essentially one – *huir de costes fijos*. The majority, however, scored the maximum by also adding that *teletrabajo* is an ideal way to establish an international profile quickly.
- (e) Some difficulty was encountered with *la gente de la calle*, with some candidates referring to ‘pedestrians’ or ‘people walking in the street’ rather than the general public. Also the idea that more than one thousand people took part in a competition – rather than a video – was sometimes misunderstood. A common lift proved to be *de 50 000 euros en 2017*. (It should be remembered that numbers count as words when determining whether five or more words have been directly copied).

Section 2

Question 4

The second text, about approaches to tackling absenteeism, provided a similar challenge to the first. Candidates’ performance was marginally better.

- (a) Generalisations such as ‘absenteeism causes companies to lose a lot of money and affects productivity’ were too imprecise to score marks. It was necessary to quote, or give close approximations of, the figures given in the text. A not uncommon lift was *al 31% la pérdida de productividad*.
- (b) A small number started their answers by saying *ha aumentado un 39%* without mentioning the subject. Most were able to identify that the working day in Spain was excessively long. To score the final point about hourly productivity it was necessary to focus on the superlative force of *la más baja*.
- (c) Candidates did very well on this four mark question and many maximum scores were recorded. The four advantages of making changes to working hours – greater involvement, better time management, more job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism – were all readily identified and, if they could be suitably paraphrased, all duly rewarded.
- (d) A very common lift was *la asistencia de los empleados*, and a number of less able candidates took the meaning of *asistencia* to be ‘help’. Many scored the mark for stating that a suitable replacement for the absentee was quickly found. Although many noted that the company raised awareness of how absenteeism impacted upon the rest of the workforce, to score the mark it was necessary to mention the nature of this impact – increased stress, lower morale. For the final mark it was necessary to state the nature of the bonus received by employees with a 95 per cent attendance record – extra time off.

- (e) Only the more able candidates were able to score the two marks available here. A few directly copied *trabajo de 8 a 3*, perhaps unaware that numbers will be counted as words. Some thought that *Sajón* was advocating that a day's work should be reduced from eight hours to three. A very common lift was *la hora de máxima audiencia* and, surprisingly, a number of candidates neglected to say what this hour referred to, i.e. television.

Question 5

As stated earlier, it was pleasing to note that many candidates now appear to be aware of the techniques required for this part of the examination. The vast majority paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. Most summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas.

- (a) High marks were scored by those who studied carefully the question which was asked, concerning *las ventajas y desventajas para el trabajador*. Many mentioned points from both texts that related to the companies, not individuals, such as *es difícil transmitir los valores de la empresa* or *no hay costes fijos* etc.

Candidates are reminded to not waste words in writing introductory sentences, such as *Las empresas crean nuevos métodos laborales para beneficiar a sus trabajadores, pero también traen desventajas*. Although this reads well for quality of language, it scores no marks for content.

It is far better to get straight into the answer as, for example:

Con el teletrabajo puedes trabajar con tu portátil desde cualquier sitio ✓ y a la hora que prefieras, ✓ lo que consigue que seas más productivo. ✓ Sin embargo hay desventajas como no poder compartir ideas con colegas ✓ ni sociabilizarte con ellos después del trabajo. ✓

The start of this answer has scored five marks in approximately forty words.

- (b) The candidates who scored full marks came up with original ideas and opinions. These included thoughts on *brecha salarial*, *mismas oportunidades de ascender para las mujeres*, *incremento de sueldos*, *más oportunidades para los recién graduados*, *mayor motivación*, *leyes sobre jubilación*, *paternidad/maternidad* etc.

Quality of Language

The quality of the majority of non-native speaking candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks were generally in the Sound to Good range. Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, native speakers were awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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Question 1

As stated in the Key Message 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) Most candidates identified the correct expression from the first paragraph of the text. Some candidates omitted *la* from the beginning of the transcription.
- (b) Most candidates identified the correct expression, but some answers were invalidated when prefaced by *con...*
- (c) As above, most were correct, but some invalidated when prefaced by *a...*
- (d) Candidates had some difficulty finding this in the text, and some who did find the relevant section began incorrectly with *ahora...* Others thought incorrectly that the equivalent of *tras volver a su pueblo* was *si regresas como yo* instead of *de nuevo en su comunidad*.
- (e) This caused many candidates difficulty. Some did not identify the need to include *apenas...*

Question 2

This was a more demanding exercise, although a number of good candidates still scored maximum or near maximum marks.

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 would be the case.

It is not necessary to change any of the other vocabulary not affected by the manipulation.

- (a) Candidates who realised that if they used *umentarse* instead of *umento* the resulting phrase would no longer fit back in the text to be followed by *...del 150%* were usually successful. However, the correct spelling of either the subjunctive or future form of *hay* proved to a challenge for some.
- (b) This was generally done well although some marks were lost when *resulta* was misinterpreted as a noun. A number of candidates changed the phrase to *resulta que todo esto es una fuerte emigración* which, although good Spanish, does not fit back into the original text with the same meaning.
- (c) A surprising number of candidates, many with a Hispanic background, appeared to be unaware that *por* is the preposition which follows *optar*. Many answers either contained the wrong preposition *a* or used no preposition at all.
- (d) This was answered well by many candidates who correctly inserted the infinitive *viajar* after *solían*. A number still unnecessarily retained *por lo general*, although this was not penalised. At times the mark was lost, either when *los* was added, which would change the meaning of the original text, or *que* was omitted. Also, some candidates either missed out *viajar*, or conjugated this as the main verb.
- (e) This was answered well by most candidates who correctly identified the need for *a/* plus the verb in the infinitive.

Question 3

The text about *hondureños* migrating and then emigrating was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved good marks. A few candidates lost marks when they copied five or more words directly from the text. A small minority disregarded the reference given to the paragraph where the information for each specific question was to be found.

Marks were sometimes lost here, and also in **Questions 4 and 5**, candidates confused the terms *migración*, *inmigración* and *emigración*.

- (a) This was a challenging question and needed careful attention to details of dates. Most candidates were able to grasp general trends, which was pleasing. A number of candidates muddled the chronology and incorrectly assumed that Hurricane Mitch occurred in 1990. The strongest candidates clearly expressed the scale of migration currently, including the fact that 90,000 Hondurans emigrate each year. Those who overlooked the significance of *hasta ahora* in the question went on unnecessarily to include details of future trends.
- (b) Most candidates were able to grasp some of the causes of the migratory movements, but few were successful in noting all four. The facts of rising unemployment and street crime were identified by most candidates, as was the lack of support for agriculture, but only the strongest candidates could clearly express the link between falling coffee exports and migration. Sometimes the mark could not be awarded as answers which would have otherwise been correct contained five or more words lifted directly from the text e.g. *la falta de ayudas gubernamentales* or *la exportación del café hondureño*.
- (c) Answers to this question required careful reading of the relevant paragraph. Most candidates scored at least one mark by noting either Carlos's desire to escape poverty and to make money quickly and easily, but not so many added that his motive for this was to it send to his family.
- (d) This question was well answered by the majority of candidates who identified the abuse of women and their low salaries, but fewer candidates specified exactly when women suffered discrimination. For this latter point a number appeared uncertain of the meaning of *cuando ya no son económicamente activas* and either lifted it directly from the text or focused incorrectly on a misinterpretation of *objeto*, stating that women were treated like objects in general.
- (e) This question proved to be a good discriminator requiring good use of tenses to answer, with only a minority gaining the full three marks. There were some good answers in terms of ideas of investment and increases in jobs and reducing migration. The strongest candidates were able to avoid lifting from the text by intelligently manipulating the source text, but some less able candidates lifted the ideas of *las inversiones en infraestructuras nacionales*, which could not thus be credited.

Section 2

Question 4

The second text, about emigration from Spain, proved to be more of a challenge.

- (a) This question required precise answers and accurate reading of vocabulary such as *aumento*, *incremento*, *igualar*, *menos de* and *con respecto a*. Those candidates who did not show accurate comprehension of the significance of the percentages given, and offered generic answers regarding the high level of emigration, did not score marks. The best performers correctly identified how the percentages linked to trends and when they referred to. Many candidates showed that they understood the information given about the percentage of those returning and were able to pick up at least one mark.
- (b) Candidates generally did well on this four mark question and scores of at least three were commonly recorded. A number struggled with expressing 'jobs matching her qualifications' and surprisingly few were able to show understanding of *bien remunerado* or express it in their own words. A common lift was *la ciencia en otros países*.
- (c) This was another question that depended on accurate expression of numbers and time frames. Many candidates identified the general trend, but some struggled to express clearly the idea of exactly when, and to what extent, the Spanish population was decreasing to half its size. Only the strongest candidates communicated clearly the contribution immigrants are making to the population size and how the reduction in number leaving is mitigating the problem. These last two points were sometimes wrongly generalised as *la población foránea es estable*.

- (d) This question was one of the better answered in this section with most candidates realising that more detail was needed in their answers than the unspecific *problemas económicos y políticos*. The idea of problems paying pensions was generally expressed well, as indeed was the idea of reduced influence in Europe, provided that lifts such as *pérdida de protagonismo en el mapa europeo* or *representación en las instituciones de la Unión Europea* were avoided.
- (e) The majority of candidates scored some marks here and, provided that they did not confuse *inmigración* and *emigración*, most were able to express the idea of needing more young people to immigrate. The need to reduce high unemployment was well expressed by those able to tease out the meaning of *dejen de registrarse las cifras de paro tan escandalosas*. Less success was achieved with the final point with many candidates unable to pinpoint the answer *incentivar con ayudas a la familia* and giving a generalised answer of increasing the number of children.

Question 5

Many candidates now appear to be aware of the techniques required for this part of the examination. The vast majority paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. More summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas. In their free-writing, many were able to write more accurately than in **Questions 3 and 4**.

- (a) There were clear differences here in scores between those who had practised this summary question, and those who were not used to the demands of the test. Some candidates had been well-prepared and selected their answers from the texts very precisely, usually achieving greater success in extracting relevant details from Text 1 rather than from Text 2. Many, though, did not answer the question and used up precious words in enumerating the possible solutions to the problems of immigration, rather than the causes and consequences. A small number of candidates wrote in general terms about migration and did not include examples from the two texts.

Highest scores were achieved by those who wrote short summaries of the key ideas in the texts, such as this:

Algunas causas de los movimientos migratorios son la pobreza, ✓ el desempleo, ✓ el crimen callejero, ✓ la falta de programas del gobierno para ayudar la agricultura ✓ y desastres naturales. ✓ La migración trae consecuencias, algunas de ellas son la disminución de salarios para las mujeres ✓ la discriminación ✓...

The start of this answer has scored seven marks in just over forty words.

This contrasts with scores attained by more generalised answers, such as:

En el texto 1 se habla del cruce de fronteras de Honduras a Estados Unidos debido a condiciones de pobreza extrema ✓ en ese país, ya que no poseen ayuda económica por parte de países extranjeros. En el texto 2 se habla de la necesidad de inmigrantes para el aumento de población y mejoras demográficas del país...

This answer uses more words to score considerably fewer marks.

- (b) Many candidates scored high marks, particularly those who brought a new idea to the table, rather than relying on ideas rehashed from the source texts. Most addressed the question correctly and candidates who were less able linguistically often offered some very good answers. Some less relevant answers did not go much beyond mentioning the scale of immigration to their country, or emigration from it. Better answers included mentioning the political or economic situation that led to these changes, or included reference to changing birth rates.

Quality of Language

The quality of most candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks were usually in the Sound to Good or Very Good range.

Strong candidates could correctly manipulate the source texts into excellent Spanish to display clear comprehension. Less able candidates often had difficulties with verb formation, and particularly the use of the singular or plural verb forms. The majority of candidates were of a Hispanic background and, despite

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misspellings, (particularly *v* for *b*, or vice versa, *y* for *ll*, and *c* for *s*), omission of accents and an abundance of anglicisms, generally produced answers in a good level of written Spanish.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31
Essay

Key messages

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

- 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, as well as 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 essay titles once again managed to differentiate well amongst the candidates, with a reasonably equitable distribution of questions attempted with some titles proving more popular than others, as is always the case. Most candidates were able to deal with the wide-ranging issues involved from a variety of different intellectual and rational standpoints. As is often the case with this paper, there were widely varying degrees of discursive analysis. Many candidates endeavoured with considerable degrees of success to engage the Examiners fully in their essay and also to convince them of their arguments in an articulate, mature and highly persuasive manner. Such candidates produced essays that were easy to read, exceptionally well structured and very often they were brimming with style and linguistic elegance.

As is to be expected, candidates in the lower range sometimes experienced difficulty in attempting to argue a particular case, both in terms of the language required to support their argument and the ability to marshal evidence in order to develop a particular point. However, in general terms, ideas were debated with enthusiasm, maturity and an appropriate level of intellectual insight. The best essays, and this will come as no surprise, showed more convincing depth and greater levels of analysis. There is a general feeling amongst Examiners that candidates approach this essay paper in a way that suggests that there is a widespread understanding of the mark scheme in so far as the importance of both language and content seems to have been taken on board.

There were still a number of essays that were too general in their interpretation of the specific issues raised by the title and which, accordingly, did not score well for content. Simply writing an essay on the theme of, for example, *La familia* will not attract decent marks when the title on the examination paper itself actually focusses on the attitude modern families should have towards their elderly relatives or on the importance of discipline as an essential element of bringing up children. It was almost as if some candidates had only registered the general topic before starting to write, without bothering to read the actual title set. Candidates who managed to maintain their focus by responding directly to the title as set out on the question paper will have been appropriately rewarded in the content section of the mark scheme

In terms of the quality of written Spanish used by candidates, there was the usual range from poor to exceptional. Many candidates showed a reasonably effective use of complex sentence structures, a wide range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic under discussion and the ability to develop their ideas in Spanish that was unaffected, clear and incisive. Candidates scored good or better marks because they kept the familiar grammatical inaccuracies and inappropriate uses of idiom to an absolute minimum. The importance of structure and, in particular, secure paragraphing was taken into account by many candidates and they were rewarded as a consequence.

In terms of the language errors most commonly made by candidates, there is (as always) very little to report that will come as a surprise to centres. Curiously this session, and this has not been noted before, quite a high number of candidates managed to confuse the word “hay” with the word “ahí” which led to utterances such as “...con respecto al turismo, ahí muchos beneficios pero también ahí muchas desventajas” (sic). Similarly, there were candidates who routinely wrote the word “jente” (sic) instead of “gente” and then went on to use a plural verb for a singular subject. Another common misunderstanding was the use of the gerund instead of a verbal noun. Accordingly, sentences such as “...viajando es mejor que quedando en casa...”(sic) were not uncommon. The most basic differences between “ser” and “estar” continued to cause trouble for a number of candidates in this session. Sentences such as “...la vida cultural es mejorando la vida en la ciudad...”(sic.) were much in evidence on occasions, despite this particular point being made in previous reports. It would be fair to say that the most common difficulties were to be found in the use of tenses and in adjectival agreements. There was also a surprisingly high number of spelling mistakes where individual letters caused trouble for candidates in phrases such as “bale la pena” (sic.), “las acciones del gobierno”(sic.), “...el desarrollo” (sic.) and “es mejor no jeneralizar...”(sic.). There also seemed to be some confusion amongst candidates with “a ser” and “hacer” which resulted in utterances such as “...la vida urbana va hacer más complicada en el futuro...”(sic.). There was also a widespread tendency to omit accents from the vast majority of words where they are required. Unsurprisingly, in some cases the lack of accents affected accuracy and clarity, particularly when it came to tenses (tomo/tomó, mandara/mandará and so on). Once again this session, there was a marked tendency to drop the letter ‘h’ in the perfect tense with utterances such as “...el asunto a sido discutido ...” (sic.) and “...muchos gobiernos an aprendido a respetar las necesidades de sus ciudadanos...” (sic.) which, of course, tended to spoil many otherwise reasonably well written essays.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- The use of a wide range of appropriately topic-related vocabulary and idiom.
- The accurate use of adjectives and adverbs to enrich the variety of language offered in the essay.
- Tenses being kept under control and used appropriately and in the right context.
- The intelligent use of expressions designed specifically to enhance structure (e.g. por otra parte, no obstante, sin embargo, a decir la verdad, al fin y al cabo etc.)
- The sensible use of connectives in order to lengthen sentences and give them more complexity whilst not sacrificing clarity.
- Correct spelling of lexical items regardless of their complexity.
- Being able to use Spanish accents in a consistently fit and proper fashion.
- Accurate punctuation.

Common errors included:

- Confusion between hay, tener and ser.
- Confusion between the letters “s” and “c” with examples such as “internasional”(sic.) and “convensional”(sic.).
- Adjectives of nationality being written with capital letters.
- The use of “porque de” (sic.) to translate “because of”.
- Poor use of the personal a and prepositions in general.
- Incorrect spelling of key words such as “el desarrollo”(sic.), “desafortunamente”(sic.), “el problema”(sic.) and “problamente” (sic.).
- Misunderstanding of the differences between “hay” and “es/tiene”.
- Writing Spanish as it sounds. For example “la jente”(sic.), “alludar”(sic.), “aci”(sic.) and “asta” (sic.).
- Use of gerunds for infinitives in utterances such as “En la familia, hablando a tus padres es importante...”(sic.)

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 La familia

¿Cuál debería ser la actitud de la familia moderna hacia sus miembros ancianos?

This was a rather popular title with candidates adopting an understandably wide range of responses. Good answers were often characterised by a variety of points stating how older family members had looked after them and that they, in turn, should therefore be treated with love and care for this reason above all others. The best answers were inclined to point out the difficulties of keeping up with a hectic life style and having

the patience to cope with physically, and sometimes mentally, weak grandparents who were often critical of the modern ways and manners of their offspring.

Question 2 La vida urbana y la vida rural

“La ciudad moderna puede ofrecer una buena calidad de vida a todos sus habitantes”. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This was also popular title. The very best answers tended to provide a balanced and thoughtful response with examples of the advantages of city life whilst also pointing out the obvious drawbacks of noise, crowds and traffic congestion. The weakest answers were extremely one-sided and mainly consisted of personal anecdotes or the repetition of a single point such as environmental pollution caused by traffic. The general consensus, nevertheless, appeared to be that the quality of life offered in cities is generally very good indeed.

Question 3 La filosofía y la creencia

“La tolerancia entre diferentes creencias es esencial”. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a less popular title on the paper. Most essays, however, were keen to point out not just the need for tolerance towards different religions but also towards other people’s opinions in general, with the proviso that these beliefs were not intended to harm others. The consequences of a lack of such tolerance were well documented by the best essays and some even made reference to historical events and conflicts which proved the point.

Question 4 El turismo

“Es obvio que el turismo trae beneficios a todos”. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This was the most popular title on the paper. Most essays were generally well documented and appropriately structured. Candidates were anxious to highlight the obvious economic advantages of tourism. The best essays backed up this fundamental point with specific examples and also highlighted the negative aspects of tourism with increased demand on resources, pollution and the potential loss of national cultures and identities. Some essays went on to suggest that every popular tourist destination should levy a ‘tourist tax’ in order to preserve the local environment.

Question 5 La vida cultural y el patrimonio

“El principal objetivo del cine contemporáneo es hacer dinero”. ¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo?

There were comparatively few attempts at this title, perhaps unsurprisingly. The level of enthusiasm for the cinema amongst those who actually attempted the title was, however, most apparent. The best essays argued somewhat convincingly that the more important contemporary film makers, whilst needing to return a profit on investment, also produced films that had a political, social or emotional impact on the cinema-going public.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32
Essay

Key messages

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- 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, as well as 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 clear impression during this session was that the essay titles once again managed to differentiate well amongst the candidates, with a reasonably equitable distribution of questions attempted with some titles proving more popular than others, as is always the case. Most candidates were able to deal with the wide-ranging issues involved from a variety of different intellectual and rational standpoints. As is often the case with this paper, there were widely varying degrees of discursive analysis. Many candidates endeavoured with considerable degrees of success to engage the Examiners fully in their essay and also to convince them of their arguments in an articulate, mature and highly persuasive manner. Such candidates produced essays that were easy to read, exceptionally well structured and very often they were brimming with style and linguistic panache. Often, such essays were not just easy to read, they were indeed a pleasure to read.

As is to be expected, candidates in the lower range sometimes experienced difficulty in attempting to argue a particular case, both in terms of the language required to support their argument and the ability to marshal evidence in order to develop a particular point. However, in general terms, ideas were debated with enthusiasm, maturity and an appropriate level of intellectual insight. The best essays, and this will come as no surprise, showed more convincing depth and greater levels of analysis. There is a general feeling amongst Examiners that candidates approach this essay paper in a way that suggests that there is a widespread understanding of the mark scheme in so far as the importance of both language and content seems to have been taken on board.

However, a number of essays that were too general in their interpretation of the specific issues raised by the title and which, accordingly, did not score well for content. Simply writing an essay on the theme of, for example, *La familia* will not attract decent marks when the title on the examination paper itself actually focusses on the attitude modern families should have towards their elderly relatives or on the importance of discipline as an essential element of bringing up children. Candidates who managed to maintain their focus by responding directly to the title as set out on the question paper will have been appropriately rewarded in the content section of the mark scheme. We remind candidates and Centres that the answers must be directly related to the question set out in the paper.

In terms of the quality of written Spanish used by candidates, there was the usual range from poor to exceptional. Many candidates showed a reasonably effective use of complex sentence structures, a wide range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic under discussion and the ability to develop their ideas in Spanish that was unaffected, clear and incisive.

Good candidates were able to make Spanish grammar work with them, not against them and they succeeded both in terms of language and content because their grasp of advanced grammar was secure and they played to their linguistic strengths.

However, there was much evidence of an increasingly poor use of punctuation. There were times when there were no signs whatsoever of punctuation being used in paragraphs that were several lines long. This renders full understanding of what a candidate is attempting to communicate very difficult. If an Examiner cannot follow the line of thought in an essay because the candidate has opted to ignore basic punctuation (full stops, commas, capital letters to begin sentences and so on) marks for content and language will be lower than would otherwise be the case. This is inevitable and unfortunate and yet it is easily avoided. Punctuation must be seen not as merely desirable but as absolutely essential to the process of essay writing.

On the other hand, the number of essays that exceeded the stipulated word limit of 250–400 words is getting lower with each session. Centres would do well to ensure that they continue to pass on the information regarding the word limit to all their candidates in such a way that there can be no doubt or misinterpretation whatsoever of this regulation. Writing in excess of the stated word limit will not result in better marks.

In terms of the language errors most commonly made by candidates, this session, and this has not been noted before, quite a high number of candidates managed to confuse the word “hay” with the word “ahí” which led to utterances such as “...con respecto al turismo, ahí muchos beneficios pero también ahí muchas desventajas” (sic). Similarly, there were candidates who routinely wrote the word “jente” (sic) instead of “gente” and then went on to use a plural verb for a singular subject. Another common misunderstanding was the use of the gerund instead of a verbal noun. Accordingly, sentences such as “...viajando es mejor que quedando en casa...”(sic) were not uncommon. The most basic differences between “ser” and “estar” continued to cause trouble for a number of candidates in this session. Sentences such as “...la vida cultural es mejorando la vida en la ciudad...”(sic.) were much in evidence on occasions, despite this particular point being made in previous reports. It would be fair to say that the most common difficulties were to be found in the use of tenses and in adjectival agreements. There was also a surprisingly high number of spelling mistakes where individual letters caused trouble for candidates in phrases such as “bale la pena” (sic.), “las acciones del gobierno” (sic.), “...el desarrollo” (sic.) and “es mejor no jeneralizar...”(sic.). There also seemed to be some confusion amongst candidates with “a ser” and “hacer” which resulted in utterances such as “...la vida urbana va hacer más complicada en el futuro...” (sic.). There was also a widespread tendency to omit accents from the vast majority of words where they are required. Unsurprisingly, in some cases the lack of accents affected accuracy and clarity, particularly when it came to tenses (tomo/tomé, mandara/mandará and so on). Once again this session, there was a marked tendency to drop the letter ‘h’ in the perfect tense with utterances such as “...el asunto a sido discutido ...” (sic.) and “...muchos gobiernos an aprendido a respetar las necesidades de sus ciudadanos...” (sic.) which, of course, tended to spoil many otherwise reasonably well written essays.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 La familia

“La disciplina es solo un aspecto de criar a los niños”. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a popular title with candidates. The range of responses was impressive, often because candidates were able to draw upon personal experience to illustrate their points. The better essays stated not just the reasons why discipline is important but also highlighted the need for other values to be inculcated in children at a very early age. Some candidates were also keen to point out that too harsh a discipline without rewards could have an adverse effect in the long run.

Question 2 La vida urbana y la vida rural

“La vida urbana no trae nada más que estrés y ansiedad”. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This was also a popular title with many candidates listing the possible causes of stress in an urban environment and the consequences this can have of the individual’s state of mental health. Many essays also counterbalanced this by showing how city life can provide a range of factors which reduce stress, namely ease of employment, a variety of entertainment and improved transport infrastructure.

Question 3 La filosofía y la creencia

“Cada persona necesita elaborar su propia filosofía de la vida”. ¿Qué opinas tú?

Those candidates who responded to the title managed to produce detailed arguments supported by relevant examples in order to reinforce the points they were attempting to make.

Question 4 El turismo

“El respeto hacia los habitantes debe ser un elemento esencial de cualquier desarrollo turístico”. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This relatively popular title was dealt with well by most candidates who endeavoured to highlight the fact that tourists often seemed to regard a foreign country (and its culture) as fair game for mockery and destructive negligence. The best essays attempted to suggest possible solutions (tourist tax, more local police in resorts and so on) yet remained realistic in pointing out the inevitability of pandering to the huge sums of money generated year on year by the tourist trade. Most essays went on to suggest that respect needs to go both ways given that the residents in many tourist resorts can often benefit directly from the tourist trade.

Question 5 La vida cultural y el patrimonio

**“La vida cultural de hoy no se concentra suficientemente en el desarrollo intelectual del individuo”.
¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo?**

The few essays that were produced were articulate and intellectually sound and often were critical of the increasing popularity of cultural trends that worship at the altar of modern celebrity. Such essays made much of the interplay between culture and an individual's intellectual development.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33
Essay

Key messages

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In terms of the quality of written Spanish used by candidates, there was the usual range from poor to exceptional. Many candidates showed a reasonably effective use of complex sentence structures, a wide range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic under discussion and the ability to develop their ideas in Spanish that was unaffected, clear and incisive.

Good candidates were able to make Spanish grammar work with them, not against them and they succeeded both in terms of language and content because their grasp of advanced grammar was secure and they played to their linguistic strengths.

However, there was much evidence of an increasingly poor use of punctuation. There were times when there were no signs whatsoever of punctuation being used in paragraphs that were several lines long. This renders full understanding of what a candidate is attempting to communicate very difficult. If an Examiner cannot follow the line of thought in an essay because the candidate has opted to ignore basic punctuation (full stops, commas, capital letters to begin sentences and so on) marks for content and language will be lower than would otherwise be the case. This is inevitable and unfortunate and yet it is easily avoided. Punctuation must be seen not as merely desirable but as absolutely essential to the process of essay writing.

On the other hand, the number of essays that exceeded the stipulated word limit of 250–400 words is getting lower with each session. Centres would do well to ensure that they continue to pass on the information regarding the word limit to all their candidates in such a way that there can be no doubt or misinterpretation whatsoever of this regulation. Writing in excess of the stated word limit will not result in better marks.

In terms of the language errors most commonly made by candidates, this session, and this has not been noted before, quite a high number of candidates managed to confuse the word “hay” with the word “ahí” which led to utterances such as “...con respecto al turismo, ahí muchos beneficios pero también ahí muchas desventajas” (sic). Similarly, there were candidates who routinely wrote the word “jente” (sic) instead of “gente” and then went on to use a plural verb for a singular subject. Another common misunderstanding was the use of the gerund instead of a verbal noun. Accordingly, sentences such as “...viajando es mejor que quedando en casa...”(sic) were not uncommon. The most basic differences between “ser” and “estar” continued to cause trouble for a number of candidates in this session. Sentences such as “...la vida cultural es mejorando la vida en la ciudad...”(sic.) were much in evidence on occasions, despite this particular point being made in previous reports. It would be fair to say that the most common difficulties were to be found in the use of tenses and in adjectival agreements. There was also a surprisingly high number of spelling mistakes where individual letters caused trouble for candidates in phrases such as “bale la pena” (sic.), “las acciones del gobierno” (sic.), “...el desarrollo” (sic.) and “es mejor no jeneralizar...”(sic.). There also seemed to be some confusion amongst candidates with “a ser” and “hacer” which resulted in utterances such as “...la vida urbana va hacer más complicada en el futuro...” (sic.). There was also a widespread tendency to omit accents from the vast majority of words where they are required. Unsurprisingly, in some cases the lack of accents affected accuracy and clarity, particularly when it came to tenses (tomo/tomé, mandara/mandará and so on). Once again this session, there was a marked tendency to drop the letter ‘h’ in the perfect tense with utterances such as “...el asunto a sido discutido ...” (sic.) and “...muchos gobiernos an aprendido a respetar las necesidades de sus ciudadanos...” (sic.) which, of course, tended to spoil many otherwise reasonably well written essays.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- The use of a wide range of appropriately topic-related vocabulary and idiom.
- The accurate use of adjectives and adverbs to enrich the variety of language offered in the essay.
- Tenses being kept under control and used appropriately and in the right context.
- The intelligent use of expressions designed specifically to enhance structure (e.g. por otra parte, no obstante, sin embargo, a decir la verdad, al fin y al cabo etc.)
- The sensible use of connectives in order to lengthen sentences and give them more complexity whilst not sacrificing clarity.
- Correct spelling of lexical items regardless of their complexity.
- Being able to use Spanish accents in a consistently fit and proper fashion.
- Accurate punctuation.

Common errors included:

- Confusion between hay, tener and ser.
- Confusion between the letters “s” and “c” with examples such as “internasional”(sic.) and “convensional”(sic.).
- Adjectives of nationality being written with capital letters.
- The use of “porque de” (sic.) to translate “because of”.
- Poor use of the personal a and prepositions in general.
- Incorrect spelling of key words such as “el desarrollo”(sic.), “desafortunamente”(sic.), “el problema”(sic.) and “problamente” (sic.).
- Misunderstanding of the differences between “hay” and “es/tiene”.
- Writing Spanish as it sounds. For example “la jente”(sic.), “alludar”(sic.), “aci”(sic.) and “asta” (sic.).
- Use of gerunds for infinitives in utterances such as “En la familia, hablando a tus padres es importante...” (sic.)

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 La familia

“La disciplina es solo un aspecto de criar a los niños”. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a popular title with candidates. The range of responses was impressive, often because candidates were able to draw upon personal experience to illustrate their points. The better essays stated not just the reasons why discipline is important but also highlighted the need for other values to be inculcated in children at a very early age. Some candidates were also keen to point out that too harsh a discipline without rewards could have an adverse effect in the long run.

Question 2 La vida urbana y la vida rural

“La vida urbana no trae nada más que estrés y ansiedad”. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This was also a popular title with many candidates listing the possible causes of stress in an urban environment and the consequences this can have of the individual’s state of mental health. Many essays also counterbalanced this by showing how city life can provide a range of factors which reduce stress, namely ease of employment, a variety of entertainment and improved transport infrastructure.

Question 3 La filosofía y la creencia

“Cada persona necesita elaborar su propia filosofía de la vida”. ¿Qué opinas tú?

Those candidates who responded to the title managed to produce detailed arguments supported by relevant examples in order to reinforce the points they were attempting to make.

Question 4 El turismo

“El respeto hacia los habitantes debe ser un elemento esencial de cualquier desarrollo turístico”. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This relatively popular title was dealt with well by most candidates who endeavoured to highlight the fact that tourists often seemed to regard a foreign country (and its culture) as fair game for mockery and destructive negligence. The best essays attempted to suggest possible solutions (tourist tax, more local police in resorts and so on) yet remained realistic in pointing out the inevitability of pandering to the huge sums of money generated year on year by the tourist trade. Most essays went on to suggest that respect needs to go both ways given that the residents in many tourist resorts can often benefit directly from the tourist trade.

Question 5 La vida cultural y el patrimonio

**“La vida cultural de hoy no se concentra suficientemente en el desarrollo intelectual del individuo”.
¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo?**

The few essays that were produced were articulate and intellectually sound and often were critical of the increasing popularity of cultural trends that worship at the altar of modern celebrity. Such essays made much of the interplay between culture and an individual's intellectual development.