

SHORT COURSE SPANISH

Paper 1344/01
Speaking

Key comments

Candidates should:

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

Candidates should also expect to:

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

General comments

The general level of spoken Spanish among our candidates this year was very good. The majority of candidates were able to maintain a conversation in fairly accurate and fluent language.

Most candidates had prepared their topics thoroughly and examiners found evidence of detailed research using different sources, in most cases, and rewarded candidates accordingly. The highest achievers included deep analysis which was backed up with relevant opinions.

There were a number of under-prepared candidates with a fairly limited knowledge of the topic in question. These candidates appeared to have only vague knowledge of some crucial aspects of their topic.

The topics were generally well-suited to an 8–10 minute discussion, being neither too broad nor too narrow. The best prepared candidates had enough material for extended discussion. However, less well prepared candidates ran out of substantial material to cover the full length of the examination.

Generally speaking, candidates were able to cope well with questions that arose naturally (i.e. rather than from their headers) and with their headers being drawn on in whatever order seemed most natural at the end of their introduction. Topics that allowed easier scope for voicing opinion were wiser choices than more descriptive or narrative subject matter. Most candidates chose topics closely linked with a cultural aspect of a Hispanic country, contributing to contextualize the topic as required by the syllabus. Statistical evidence was often helpful though it needs to be accurate.

In at least one case a candidate’s fluency was clearly impaired by attempts to recall pre-learned material. *Que yo sepa* was perhaps a curious idiom to choose when setting out factual points on topics the candidates had spent a substantial amount of time researching.

Control of grammatical accuracy remained a challenge. Adjective agreement is a requirement for a candidate's Spanish to be deemed 'accurate'. The present tense posed a number of challenges, as did the verb *gustar*. To score over half-marks in Range and Accuracy requires – even for native-speaker candidates – a conscious and deliberate effort to use broader vocabulary and complex sentence patterns, including accurate subjunctives. Around half the type 2 or type 3 *si* clauses attempted did not achieve the correct combination of tenses. Correct use of the imperfect subjunctive, where required by the sequence of tenses, was a differentiator.

On idioms, candidates often attempted anglicisms in place of *cada vez más/cada vez menos* + adjective. Time structures using *desde hace* or equivalents were often overlooked in favour of anglicised variants. 'Personas' was overused: there is usually a more accurate term available (*usuarios, pasajeros, transeuntes, consumidores, espectadores, ciudadanos, vecinos, votantes, aficionados....*). 'Según' would have helped the flow on occasions.

On pronunciation, the letter 's' was often lisped or, at the end of a word, pronounced like an English 'z'. Attempts at *-ara* imperfect subjunctives missed the mark when stressed as though the future tense.

SPANISH

Paper 1344/02
Listening, Reading and Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the examiner in unambiguous language.

General comments

This report will look at candidates' performance this session but will also concentrate on giving advice and guidance for future examinations. This is a mixed-skills paper which allows candidates to show their Spanish-language skills in Listening, Reading and Writing.

Part I – Listening

Candidates have control of their own individual listening equipment. They may stop, rewind and replay the recording at will, and they may make notes and write their answers at any point.

Listening Text 1 was an item about electric cars in Spain. Candidates were given a printed summary of the extract with five gaps left blank. Below the summary, they were offered a choice of three words or phrases to complete the sentences and had to underline the most appropriate option. The material was understood well by candidates and generally the correct options were chosen, although some candidates chose *a la ciudad* rather than *a la red eléctrica* for **Question 2** or *consejos* rather than *subsídios* for **Question 5**.

The extract for **Listening Text 2** was an interview with the Spanish golfer José María Olazábal. The exercise, involving straightforward Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally done well. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. All the relevant information must be given but candidates are not required to answer in full sentences. The Examiners only mark what is correct. All irrelevant and superfluous information is disregarded, unless it adversely affects the correct target information. Most of the questions were understood and candidates wrote appropriate replies. For **Question 6**, most candidates identified *el País Vasco* or *la región vasca*, but some wrote the English version 'Basque'. It was necessary to answer **Question 7** in the present tense or include a reference to *este año* and candidates needed to give complete information – *trabajar fuerte en el gimnasio con un entrenador personal* – to gain the two marks available for **Question 8**. Some candidates had difficulty explaining the answer to **Question 9**, but the mark scheme allowed various alternative explanations, such as *uno mismo*, *el golfista mismo* or *él mismo*. Whilst most candidates answered **Questions 10** and **11** correctly, for **Question 13**, some candidates understood odd words but not the overall meaning to provide a correct answer.

In **Listening Text 3** candidates heard an interview with Sandra Mihanovich, an Argentinian singer who recently donated one of her kidneys. The material certainly appeared to be accessible and candidates made a good attempt at answering the English questions set on it. Even if candidates did not know some individual lexical items, such as *madrina*, *consanguíneos*, *vínculo* or *gira*, the mark scheme gave alternative options to gain the marks. Sometimes, however, rather than weak comprehension of the Spanish material, a candidate might have lost marks because of awkward English expression that did not convey the information correctly. Overall, there was evidence of a good level of comprehension.

Part II – Reading

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

Reading Text 1 was a short article about a special promotion to encourage the Spanish public to go to the cinema with reduced price tickets. The material was understood by the candidates and the exercise, involving multiple choice options, was generally well done.

The passage used for **Reading Text 2** was a longer article about the number of teenage pregnancies in Spain. The text had Spanish-language questions and answers set on it. Generally, the material was understood very well and most candidates answered the questions with confidence and correctly. It is essential that candidates should use their own words rather than attempt to reproduce the original text word for word. They must also ensure that they give the full information required to gain the marks available. All the questions were understood well by candidates, although a few were not able to explain that Susana was 18 when she had her son Alejandro for **Question 29**, used the wrong tense to answer **Question 30** or failed to explain that the couple divorced for **Question 31**.

Reading Text 3 was an article about new legislation introduced in the Catalan city of Badalona to curb the amount of young people openly drinking alcohol in the streets as part of the phenomenon known in Spain as *el botellón*. The material was generally well understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the passage in a fluent, comprehensible way. The only individual vocabulary items that proved problematic were *la vía pública*, *rige*, *el descanso* and *normativas parecidas*. Otherwise, it appears that the candidates found the material accessible and gave appropriate answers.

Part III – Guided Writing (45 minutes)

Candidates were given a choice of two texts and had to write a response of 220–250 words in Spanish, based on a series of five bullet points. The material contained in the two extracts was clearly accessible to candidates and candidates succeeded in writing appropriate responses in a good level of fluent Spanish. The two options were equally popular and a variety of interesting essays were seen.

The first article discussed programmes for encouraging Spanish pupils to spend a period of time studying in other European countries. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to it, giving their opinion on foreign language learning in their own country and the importance of learning other languages and then moving on to discuss the dominance of English in the world of business and technology and the advantages and disadvantages of the free movement of workers in Europe. The candidates who chose this option were clearly familiar with the concepts and the vocabulary needed and produced some good answers.

The second article discussed a report about the Inter-American Water Day. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, giving their reaction to it and discussing the link between clean water and good health. They then needed to assess the importance of water in the world and to consider whether individuals in the developed world can do anything to help the situation in the developing world. Finally, they were asked to consider the relative importance of investing money in eliminating poverty in the world or in investing money to maintain armed forces. The candidates who chose this option provided some interesting responses to the task.

The response is marked according to the published marking grids. Firstly, the essay is marked for Content according to the task set and the bullet points, bearing in mind originality and development of ideas. Then the Quality of Language is assessed, taking into account both accuracy and variety of lexis and structure and to what extent error impedes comprehension. Candidates are expected to use an acceptable formal letter format and to write within the word limits.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

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

Answering English questions set on the texts

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

Guided Writing

Covering the content

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

The Spanish-language requirements for all the tasks

- Remember that essential basic grammar knowledge is required. You should aim for responding in accurate language;
- be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular;
- be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person;
- be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (e.g. *mi* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.);
- use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses;
- be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (e.g. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.);
- know when accents are important (e.g. *trabajo* or *trabajó?* *esta*, *está* or *ésta?*);

- be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully;
- develop a bank of suitable phrases for your essay writing: how to begin (para empezar), making general statements (hablando en forma general), giving opinions (me parece que), explaining (es decir), disagreeing (no estoy de acuerdo con), giving justification (no cabe duda de que), expanding ideas (no sólo ... sino también), contradicting (a pesar de que), suggesting (es posible que) and concluding (en resumen), etc. (N.B. These are only suggestions and candidates should build up their own banks of phrases).