

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

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 also 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: **(i)** Initial presentation of a maximum of 3 ½ minutes; **(ii)** Topic Conversation on issues arising from the Presentation (7–8 minutes); **(iii)** General Conversation on themes completely different from those raised in the Topic Conversation (8–9 minutes).
- 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, as a result, candidates had the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability. Most candidates had been well prepared for the examination, were interested in the topics they had chosen and could speak for the required time.

There were fewer problems with CD recordings this session but all Centres are again reminded to announce the Centre number and candidate 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 recording. Please ensure that all the candidate details on the working mark sheets are completed. The samples submitted must reflect the whole of the candidate range and include the top, middle and lowest mark. Centres are once again reminded that their marks cannot be confirmed or moderated unless working mark sheets with a full breakdown of marks are submitted with the recordings.

Some Centres did not make a clear distinction between the Topic and the General Conversation sections. The correct timings for each section must be observed to allow candidates sufficient opportunity to offer a suitable range of higher-level language, or to deal with an adequate selection of issues.

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

The General Conversation section frequently proved challenging, owing to the unprepared nature of the topics, and was variable in standard. Although many candidates rose to the occasion fairly readily, some

were less forthcoming and 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 as opposed to more unexpected ones. Candidates were not always called upon to operate at a sufficiently advanced level: there were cases where questioning was at a level more appropriate to IGCSE or O level. The general conversation must cover issues that are clearly different from those covered in the topic conversation section. Although the section may start with some factual or personal information, such as plans and interests, the conversation should be developed further to allow candidates scope for greater depth, both in content and in linguistic range. 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. Candidates should ask the Examiner at least two substantial questions in each conversation section to have access to the full range of marks for seeking information and opinions.

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

Pronunciation was generally acceptable although problems with some more difficult sounds occasionally impeded communication. Many candidates, however, made real efforts to sound authentic. As has been reported previously, over-reliance on prepared material sometimes led to problems with intonation and stress, causing the presentation to be hard to follow.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1: 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 explicit in their Presentation. The content mark out of ten is halved if the Hispanic perspective is not clearly expressed.

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 and organisation, together with relevant factual detail.

Good presentations included a personal overview of the issue, essential factual information and prepared the ground for an informed debate in the topic conversation. Candidates who did not speak clearly or who did not engage the examiner's interest scored less well here.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

The Topic Conversation requires candidates to develop points arising from the presentation. This part of the test should not just be an invitation to the candidate to give a further series of mini-presentations: interaction is an important criterion. Candidates should take part in a discussion, justify or refute a point of view, and give relevant examples or information. Those candidates who could only recite pre-learned answers could not achieve high marks for spontaneity and responsiveness.

Candidates should ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions and Examiners should take care not to give lengthy responses. Wherever possible, candidates' questions should arise naturally in the discussion. Although no penalty is imposed if a candidate needs a reminder, some Centres were over-generous in their marks for irrelevant or all-purpose questions. No marks for this could be awarded if no questions were asked. It is insufficient for the examiner just to give an opinion without being asked.

Section 3: General Conversation

This must be a separate section from the Topic Conversation and different issues must be discussed. Popular items included current affairs, the generation gap, the arts, education, sport, health, the economy, politics, social and environmental concerns.

There were still some cases of questioning at a level more appropriate to IGCSE or Ordinary Level. All conversations should go beyond the descriptive and provide scope for the use of more complex language. To gain access to the higher categories in the mark scheme, the range and style of questioning should allow candidates to demonstrate competence in dealing with advanced themes and show that they can express and justify opinions.

As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the examiner questions to seek information and opinions and should 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 cannot attract much credit.

Language

Quality of language is assessed in both Conversation sections. Examiners are reminded to encourage candidates to use as wide a range of language as possible, both in terms of vocabulary and structure. To gain access to the higher ranges of the mark scheme, candidates need to show competence in dealing with hypothetical and abstract situations as well as in factual or descriptive areas.

Accuracy was often lacking in verb endings and tenses, use of *ser/estar*, genders and noun/adjective/verb agreements, numbers, dates and quantities.

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

Comprehension of the two texts, dealing with contrasting attitudes to, and opportunities for, employment in Chile and Spain was generally good. Scripts were usually well presented and legible, and only a few candidates seemed to have had difficulty with time-management. A number of candidates would have benefited from more preparation in how to approach the summary question in 5(a).

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

For the vast majority of candidates this exercise proved to be a sound start to the examination. Other than misidentification of the target phrase, the most common error was to identify the answer correctly but then to invalidate it, either by omitting words or including extra ones.

- (a) The target phrase was usually identified. However, a lot of answers were invalidated by the unnecessary addition of ...*a Australia*, or even just ...*a*.
- (b) Identification was more of a problem here. A number of candidates incorrectly suggested *están resguardados por la cobertura* rather than *cuentan con el soporte económico*.
- (c) Most candidates found little difficulty in identifying the equivalent expression in the text.
- (d) This was also generally well done.
- (e) The majority also got this right. A common error amongst those who were unsuccessful was to add ...*y su tiempo libre* to an otherwise correct answer.

Question 2

This test in language manipulation proved to be a fairly straightforward exercise. Most scored over half marks, with many scoring high or even maximum marks.

- (a) Most candidates realised that they had to use the preposition *por* after the verb *optar*. However, some of them omitted it or used the preposition *a* instead.
- (b) The need for a subjunctive construction after *es necesario que* was almost universally recognised. A common error amongst the minority who did not score a mark was the omission of *se*.
- (c) This was answered correctly by nearly every candidate.
- (d) Most candidates identified that they had to use the subjunctive or the infinitive in this structure. Several possible manipulations were acceptable.
- (e) This manipulation caused more problems than any of the others. In this exercise it is important to remember that the manipulated phrase should fit back seamlessly into the text in the place of the original version, and candidates should be reminded to try this out before moving on to the next question. Here, in the text, the phrase is followed by ...*por la presión laboral*, and therefore the only way to work *desgastada* into the answer is with a passive construction. A number of verbs were possible (but not *estar*), and all needed to be in a past tense.

Question 3

Comprehension of the text about young people in Chile who are disinclined to work or study was generally good, and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers to the questions in their own words achieved good marks. Some candidates lost marks when they copied five or more words directly from the text.

- (a) Almost all candidates successfully stated the fact that *ninīs* were those who did not work or study. However, not so many noted that another requirement in order to be categorised as a *nini* was to be aged between fifteen and twenty-nine. Those who did mention this often overlooked the fact that *entre 15 y 29 años* would count as a five word lift.
- (b) Most candidates correctly answered that to be a *nini* was a problem for the over 18s, as those younger than this have to go to school and are covered under the education system. There was some difficulty in understanding *cobertura* amongst less able candidates. To score the second point it was necessary to state that the over 18s felt or believed that they did not fit into the labour market.
- (c) This was a fairly accessible question, and most candidates provided satisfactory answers containing at least two of the three points. A majority correctly stated that *ninīs* from families who could support them economically did not know how to deal with lost opportunities, with many quite legitimately using the paraphrase *combatir posibilidades falladas* from **Question 1(c)** to avoid copying from the text. There was similar success in stating that *ninīs* did not want to do anything until they were sure, with lifts often being avoided this time by repeating the phrase given in answer to **Question 2(d)**. The third point, although often correctly identified, was frequently invalidated by the direct copy *trabajar en lo que no estudiaron*.
- (d) Good marks were often scored for this five mark question. A few candidates did not differentiate between the two parts to the question, and just wrote one answer under (d). This is not to be recommended, as it usually resulted in certain elements in the question not being addressed.
 - (i) Most candidates stated that *ninīs* did not want the same life as their parents because they had witnessed the negative effects that work had had on them, as well as the fact that they were aware that they had sacrificed their present for future benefits. Occasionally, these two answers were collated into one, resulting in the loss of some of the required details. Most of them also stated the fact that *ninīs* did not think that a full time job would provide a better quality of life. A number of answers in this part of the question were invalidated by the lifts *cómo la vida de sus* and *una mejor calidad de vida*.
 - (ii) The fact that *ninīs* preferred their free time or social life to work was well understood. Not so many, however, went on to state that they wanted to succeed and benefit immediately.

- (e) This was mostly well answered, although some answers were invalidated because of lifts or there was a lack of key information. Most candidates correctly stated the fact that *ninis* between the age of 15 and 18 had been expelled from school. Although many also picked upon the idea that young *ninis* were seeking to defy their teachers or parents, a number omitted to say that their means of doing so was to drop out of school. A common lift here was *desafiar a los adultos responsables*. Almost every candidate stated that another reason was the addiction of the *ninis* to alcohol and videogames, with answers sometimes being marred by the direct copying of *adicciones a videojuegos y alcohol*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with the rather gloomy future prospects of young Spaniards, provided a similar level of challenge.

- (a) Most candidates successfully noted that the vision of life held by young Spaniards was contradictory because, although they live comfortably in a democratic society, they believe that their lives will not be better than those of their parents. Sometimes a mark was lost because of the direct copying of *que la de sus padres*.
- (b) Good marks were not so common for this question. Very few candidates picked up a mark for stating that unemployment had been hitting young people hard for a number of years. Nearly all attempted to say that half of the young people were unemployed, although correct answers were often negated by copying either *más del 50% de los (jóvenes españoles)* or *entre 16 y 29 años*. Most candidates were able to state that there would be a lack of jobs related to the specific studies or degrees that candidates were doing at the moment, although less able candidates sometimes misinterpreted this to mean that they could not get a job because they had not studied.
- (c) Candidates all agreed that the economic crisis would have a negative impact on the lives of young people, although further detail was often not supplied. The fact that there would be a negative impact on future careers was often overlooked, and some also stated that economic requirements would be higher, which was really a feature of the crisis itself and not a consequence. The phrase *el bienestar y la calidad de vida* was often copied directly.
- (d) Some candidates misinterpreted this question – often to the detriment of their quality of language mark – and gave their own interpretation of González’s words e.g. *menciona las sombras porque el futuro es negro y es una metáfora...* rather than using the text to find answers to the question. To score the first mark it was necessary to state that young people lacked projects which excited or motivated them. Candidates who scored a mark for the second answer to the question often came up with excellent paraphrases for *derrotados por las circunstancias*.
- (e) Most candidates scored well on this two part question. As with **Question 3(d)**, a few candidates did not differentiate between the two parts, and just wrote one answer.
- (i) This was generally answered well. One or two candidates stated incorrectly that work brought world peace rather than it was the basis of keeping peace in society. One common lift was *punto clave para la paz social*. Candidates also understood well that work allowed the individual to integrate in society, although another common lift was *la integración personal y social*.
- (ii) The majority were able to state correctly at least two of the three required points: that the possible consequence of unemployment was social exclusion which, if it became widespread, could lead to conflict, but that this was unlikely to happen in Spain due to the support of the 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, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for part (b).

- (a) Once again this question produced the most disappointing answers in the entire examination. Candidates who had achieved good or even excellent marks elsewhere frequently struggled to reach even half marks here. The problem was invariably a lack of familiarity with the required technique, which may be very different from the technique which candidates have been encouraged to use in other forms of summary writing.

For this task the technique required for achieving a good mark is to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Rather than look for similarities between the texts – which will often lead to vague generalisations – it is better to consider each text in turn, and pick out specific details which answer the question. 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 so incorporating the titles of the texts into the body of the summary will also waste precious words. In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the text(s). It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

A good example of the required technique for this question begins: *En Chile existen muchos jóvenes llamados ninis que no estudian ni trabajan. No quieren trabajos en aquello que no estudiaron, y prefieren no hacer nada hasta aclarar sus ideas. Suelen pensar distinto que sus padres respecto al trabajo y prefieren navegar en las redes sociales que trabajar. En España...* In fewer than 50 words this candidate scored 5 marks, and also left ample opportunity to increase this score by going on to answer the question with regard to young people in Spain.

In the following example, the candidate used more words and scored nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark: *Los jóvenes de esta generación no se están enfocando en las cosas más importantes y se están dejando llevar por cosas menos relevantes. En Chile tenemos a los ninis que no están muy preocupados por su futuro y no están dando importancia a sus deberes. Los jóvenes españoles no están centrados en lo que quieren hacer y se están dejando llevar por la situación del país...*

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this last part of the examination the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers. Most candidates were able to write about young people and work in their country and gave some appropriate opinions. Occasionally marks were lost when candidates wrote about the general employment situation in their country, without reference to young people.

Quality of Language

The quality of 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

- **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

Comprehension of the two texts, dealing with different attitudes towards gender equality in Spain and Latin America was generally good. Many candidates appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required. Scripts were usually well presented and legible, and only a few candidates seemed to have had difficulty with time-management.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Other than misidentification of the target phrase, the most common error in this exercise was to identify the answer correctly but then to invalidate it, either by omitting words or including extra ones.

- (a) This phrase sometimes proved to be difficult to identify successfully.
- (b) A common error amongst both more and less able candidates was to invalidate the correct answer by adding ...*y castigar*.
- (c) Candidates of all levels of ability were usually successful in identifying this phrase.
- (d) This was the most accessible phrase.
- (e) Although readily identified, answers were sometimes invalidated by the omission of the initial *no...*

Question 2

This proved to be a challenging question.

- (a) Successful use of a *gustar* construction proved challenging. Some candidates who had been able to produce the correct answer then invalidated it by commencing *a el abuelo...*

- (b) It was encouraging to see the number of candidates who realised that a subjunctive verb was needed here, and a fair amount of success was achieved.
- (c) A correct manipulation here required *atraen* to be preceded by either *las que* or *aquellas que*.
- (d) Candidates needed to substitute *es suficiente* for *basta*, and the rest of the words and their order could remain unchanged.
- (e) It was pleasing to note that many realised that a subjunctive verb would be required after *hace falta que*, although the orthographical change caught a number out.

Question 3

Understanding of this text about gender equality in domestic duties and obstacles that are faced in Spain varied according to the ability level of the candidates. More able candidates successfully presented the required information in their own words, often using complex linguistic structures. Instances of copying five or more words directly from the text occurred more by oversight than design among such candidates. At the other end of the scale, a number of less able candidates, who had had difficulty in comprehension, often resorted to copying entire sentences of original text. In between these two extremes, candidates of middling ability often successfully identified the material required, and then endeavoured to 'tweak' the word order in order to avoid copying directly. When this technique produced coherent answers, it was rewarded.

- (a) The first paragraph of the text was generally well understood, perhaps sometimes better than the question, which asked for a description of *la tendencia creciente ejemplificada por Martín Aliaga*. What was required in the answer was not a description of *Martín's* circumstances, but the trend which he illustrated: that rather than just lend a hand, Spanish men share domestic duties, or even do more than their partners.
- (b) Understanding again seemed to be generally good, but answers sometimes lacked the precision of detail required. Many candidates were successful in stating that the modern father wanted a closer, more affectionate relationship with his children. Not so many were successful in comparing this with the traditional role of breadwinner and disciplinarian. The modern grandfather needed to be considered separately from the father, in order to make it clear that the former really enjoyed looking after the children.
- (c) This proved to be the most accessible of the five comprehension questions, and good or very good scores were often recorded. A considerable majority of candidates were able to note that the traditional Spanish attitude towards childcare was that it was something that the woman did. Many were also able to add that the women now wanted domestic responsibilities to be shared, and also that the task that appealed most to men was that of looking after the children.
- (d) Good marks were a lot harder to come by for this question. The three points – that work culture is generally hostile to childcare, men are afraid to request the leave that they are entitled to, wives do not appreciate this difficulty – all proved difficult to tease out.
- (e) This was almost as challenging as its predecessor. Not so many candidates were able to show comprehension that the traditional role is so internalised in certain women that they become the ones who stop men from participating. More success was achieved in stating that women should accept that men will do things differently.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Comprehension of the second text seemed to provide a similar level of challenge to that of the first.

- (a) This was the most accessible of the questions on this text. Most candidates, although not all, realised that *Joaquina Rocío's* assessment of difficulties faced by Latin American women was to be found in the indirect, not the direct, speech. All three points – financial and social inequality, no recognition of unpaid work, and lack of political participation – were to be found at the end of the paragraph.

- (b) The measures which would improve the situation of women in the workplace were fairly straightforward to identify. Candidates were generally successful in noting that working women had little basic protection, but were less so when attempting to paraphrase *sin el potencial de crecimiento profesional* and *una legislación que reconozca las presiones que representa la maternidad*.
- (c) Many were able to show clearly that they understood that more and more women were breaking through the glass ceiling, although it still exists in national and workplace cultures, and that there is still a lack of successful female role models to follow. Others were not so successful, with many having difficulty trying to explain the *techo de cristal*, and often omitting the second part of the question.
- (d) Nearly every candidate, provided that they did not copy five or more words directly from the text, was able to state that the culture of *machismo* was something that was passed down through the generations. Fewer managed to pick up a second mark by adding that it was also embedded in the workplace. Only the good candidates had sufficient language skills to produce a successful paraphrase for *Las sociedades latinas actuales aún manifiestan cierto reproche implícito a las mujeres de éxito*.
- (e) Most candidates scored at least one mark here, with the most popular correct answer being a successful re-wording of *en América Latina una mujer tiene la posibilidad de liderar*. The required, underlined details of *las empresas intentan guardar sus empleadas con aptitud* were often omitted. However, many candidates successfully noted that some countries had elected a woman as their president (sometimes giving names).

Question 5

It was encouraging to note an increased awareness of the techniques required to be successful in this question. Only a very small minority of candidates overlooked the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for part (b).

- (a) To achieve a good mark it is essential to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the text(s). It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

Rather than look for vague points in common between the two texts about why gender inequality persists and then embellish these with an introduction and conclusion, the technique which will score good marks is to launch straight in and consider first one text and then the other. For example: *El mundo laboral actual choca con el hecho de que un padre cuide de sus hijos, es por eso que la mayoría no piden permiso de paternidad. También muchas mujeres tienen el rol de la responsabilidad del hogar muy interiorizado. Esto hace que los padres no puedan participar ya que nunca tienen la opción de aprender. En Latinoamérica las mujeres...*

Candidates who adopted this approach scored well, regardless of linguistic ability. A minority reduced their opportunity to score by disregarding the question asked and gave details about how gender inequality is being broken down.

- (b) There were a lot of interesting answers to this part of the question, with candidates from the same country often giving diverse opinions about whether there was gender equality there. Of course, all opinions were equally valid, as long as some justification was given. Better answers often contained ideas which had not appeared in the texts. Less able candidates sometimes wrote *desigualdad* when they meant *igualdad*, and vice versa.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks awarded ranged from Below Average to Very Good, with most marks falling between the Sound to Very Good range.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
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.
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- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

Comprehension of the two texts, dealing with different attitudes towards physical exercise in Uruguay and Spain was generally good. Most candidates appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required, and it was pleasing to note a widespread awareness of more complex linguistic structures, with subjunctive constructions featuring prominently. Scripts were usually well presented and legible, and only a few candidates seemed to have had difficulty with time-management.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Other than misidentification of the target phrase, the most common error in this exercise was to identify the answer correctly but then to invalidate it, either by omitting words or including extra ones.

- (a) Perhaps the fact that a mere three words of text were sufficient to convey the meaning of the six words in the question cast doubt into the minds of those candidates who added superfluous words.
- (b) This was sometimes offered incorrectly as the answer to (a).

Questions (c) and (d) were generally very well done.

- (e) Some answers were invalidated by the addition of ...*entre*.

Question 2

Candidates had been well-prepared for this challenging exercise. Some excellent marks of 4 and 5 were achieved, and fewer among the less able candidates returned scores of 0.

- (a) There were a number of ways to perform this manipulation, and many candidates were successful. Occasionally answers, which otherwise would have been correct, were marred by errors such as *veen* for *ven*, or *el televisión*.
- (b) This caused a little more difficulty than had been anticipated. Some answers stated that the movement had created Dr Lima, rather than vice versa. Other answers were invalidated by the omission of *el* before his title.
- (c) Nearly every candidate recognised that the manipulation required here would involve the use of the subjunctive. Unfortunately, there were also a couple of other obstacles to negotiate. Firstly, an orthographical change to *que* was needed, and then it was important to recognise that only impersonal forms such as *se practique* / *sea practicada*, or perhaps even *practiques actividad física*, would fit back into the original text.
- (d) This proved to be the most difficult of the manipulations. Many did not realise that all the elements of *lo avanzado de su edad* were contained in *mayores*, and that something as simple as *porque son mayores* was all that was needed.
- (e) The use of *soler* + *infinitive* to convey the idea of *normalmente* was very well known, and the vast majority of candidates were successful.

Question 3

The text about physical exercise, or the lack of it, amongst the population of Uruguay appeared to be generally well understood. More able candidates successfully presented the required information in their own words, often using complex linguistic structures. Instances of copying five or more words directly from the text were rare. Candidates of middling ability often successfully identified parts of the text that would answer questions, and then endeavoured to 'tweak' the word order in order to avoid copying directly. When this technique produced coherent answers, it was rewarded.

- (a) The majority of candidates scored one mark for their answers, with a fairly even division between which piece of correct information was given. Fewer candidates were successful in highlighting that although Uruguayans seemed to be very interested in sport, (the streets emptied when the national team were playing), this interest rarely exceeded watching sport on television.
- (b) Many were successful in eliciting the first two points. A few candidates overlooked the fact that they had been asked to compare Uruguayans with other Latin Americans, and that it was not enough just to say that they are sedentary and obese. The rankings, of first and second respectively, were required. Although many mentioned hypertension and diabetes, the third mark was only awarded if an association was made between these and the two conditions stated earlier.
- (c) Good marks were commonly scored, with both parts proving to be equally accessible. In part (i) many sensibly re-submitted their answer to **2(c)** which, even if it had proved linguistically inaccurate earlier, worked well to show comprehension here. Less able candidates often found difficulty in juggling words from line 11 about 'changing one's lifestyle' to write something which made sense.

The elements needed to answer part (ii) were often readily identified. The final mark was sometimes missed when candidates neglected to include benefits to both physical and psychological wellbeing in their answers.
- (d) For a considerable majority of candidates who had read the question carefully this proved to be straightforward. They were able to paraphrase *no disponen de suficiente tiempo* and, provided that 'age' was qualified in some way by 'old', the question could be answered fairly briefly. Candidates who overlooked *los dos argumentos más populares* of the question, and gave three or more reasons, were penalised.

- (e) This final question proved to be more challenging, and only a minority of candidates were able to score maximum marks. A few less able candidates disregarded the *nivel socioeconómico* element in the question, although it is flagged up clearly in the text, and chose incorrectly to focus their answers on the relationship between age and physical activity. However, most candidates were able to note that the middle and upper classes were considerably more active than the working classes. Not so many were successful in noting the relationship between good careers and physical activity, or to state coherently that the bottom rung of society did not participate in sports.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with the popularity of hiking in Spain, proved to be equally accessible, with only one or two candidates finding some difficulty in distinguishing between *sedentarismo* in the first text and *senderismo* here.

- (a) The vast majority of candidates were able to pick up on the cognate *antídoto al estrés* as a reason for the popularity of *senderismo*. Similarly, *desconectarse de la vida en la ciudad*, when paraphrased or re-worded coherently, was an equally accessible reason. However, only more able candidates were able to show that they fully appreciated the significance of *fortalecer...los músculos y los vínculos con amigos...*
- (b) Most candidates were able to state that the number of agencies which specialised in organising weekend hikes had increased. However, many overlooked the force of *ahora* in the question, and went on to give, as their second reason why it is easy to take part in this activity, the minimal amount of fitness that it requires. The fact that access to rural trails had improved considerably was often overlooked.
- (c) Two of the required points proved to be accessible to most. The fact that there are now numerous websites giving abundant information for organising walks was commonly noted. Most candidates were also successful in stating that national parks and many local councils have leaflets available which give suggestions for walks in their areas. Only more able candidates, however, scored maximum marks by fully addressing the question stating that in the past the only way was to join a club.
- (d) The fact that *Encamino.com* gathers together all the information provided by agencies and companies specialising in guided walks in Spain was often correctly stated. Fewer candidates successfully added that the other reason for visiting this site was to plan an outing for the following weekend.
- (e) The more accessible aspects to be borne in mind when planning a walk were to take high-energy food and check the weather forecast. Considerably more linguistic ability was needed to state successfully that the itinerary chosen should match the ability of the group, and that the pace of the walk should be planned around the speed of the slowest participant.

Question 5

Most candidates had been well prepared in the techniques needed to answer this question. Only a very small minority of candidates appeared to be unaware 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, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

- (a) To achieve a good mark it is essential to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the text(s). It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

Many candidates carefully considered the question which had been asked and were successful in selecting relevant details from the texts for their answers, resulting in a number of high scores being recorded. By asking about the contrasting attitudes to exercise in the two countries, in order to access all the available marks, most candidates adopted the sensible approach of dealing first with one country and then the other. With this approach, the temptation to include titles, such as *La*

falta de popularidad del ejercicio en Uruguay, should be resisted, as this only adds to the word count.

- (b) There were some very pleasing answers to this part of the question, and a lot of candidates finished their examination on a high. With only two or three sentences at their disposal, many seized the opportunity to show off their familiarity with more complex linguistic structures. Better answers included opinions and original ideas, for example, the belief that the popularity of video games was having an adverse effect on the population's participation in physical activity.

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:

- 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

In general terms, there was a wide range of abilities demonstrated in this paper from the poor to the very good indeed. Many candidates were able to demonstrate an ability to produce an intelligently conceived essay that was both highly relevant to the title set, convincingly argued and coherently structured. The level of linguistic ability on show from a good number of candidates was very good indeed.

No particular essays stood out as being much more popular than others on the paper. Most candidates tackled the issues from a variety of different approaches and to a varying degree of depth and analysis. There is never any particular approach favoured by Examiners in such essays. The important factor is that candidates argue their case with reasonably intelligent discussion and support their views with evidence of understanding of the topic under analysis. As always, however, the importance of sticking to the title selected cannot be emphasized enough. Some candidates again lost marks for content by writing a pre-learned essay that was clearly not a genuine response to the title set. It remains good technique on the candidate's part to refer to the title as often as necessary throughout the essay in order to maintain relevance and reach articulate and clearly stated conclusions. More often than not, the majority of candidates who understood that this was important scored good or very good marks for content.

Word count was not a widespread problem this session although, sadly, a number of candidates still felt the need to write well in excess of the stipulated length (250 – 400 words as stated clearly in the rubric). It is worth pointing out that such candidates tend to lose marks for content and also for language given that the longer the essay goes over the word limit, the more likely candidates are to make linguistic errors. Equally, it would be unfair on those candidates who observe the word limit carefully not to penalize those who ignore this clearly stated regulation.

There were numerous examples of essays that were structured sensibly and written accurately. It was obvious that many candidates had prepared themselves thoroughly for this paper. Those who fully appreciate the importance of clear style, linguistic accessibility, relevance to the title set and the use of a good range of grammatical constructions will always score high marks on this paper. There were, however, plenty of examples of essays that were less convincing both in terms of language and content. Not paying attention to the title selected and then presenting ideas in a style that is hesitant in terms of Spanish grammar and syntax will more often than not result in marks being at best mediocre and at worst poor.

In terms of the language used by candidates in their essays, the overall quality of Spanish was very good. Essays that were coherently written with an appropriate level of detail, wide-ranging vocabulary and a decent range of linguistic structures all scored highly for language. The linguistic errors made in such pieces were minimal and did not disrupt the flow of the argument. Nevertheless, some essays contained very simple linguistic errors which, had final checks been made, could easily have been spotted by candidates. It is important that candidates leave some time towards the end of the examination to allow for a thorough check of what they have actually written.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- the use of articulate and readable sentences that were able to convey the writer's line of thought with clarity;
- an ability to employ complex constructions appropriate to an advanced level of essay writing;
- the correct application of the subjunctive in impersonal expressions such as *...es importante que el gobierno entienda la situación...*
- correct singular/plural subject and verb agreements.

Common errors included:

- the omission of 'h' in utterances such as *el individuo ha decidido que...* etc.
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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones humanas*

This was a popular title with candidates adopting a wide and very interesting range of responses. Good essays were characterised by a variety of points stating not just the negative effects of imitation but also the positive role it plays in the development of human behaviour. The weaker essays restricted themselves to the repetition of a couple of simple and obvious points related loosely to the title.

Question 2 *La vida rural y la vida humana*

This was a generally well-answered question with the very best essays providing a variety of reasons as to why both styles of living have advantages as well as disadvantages. Most concluded that life in the city is more stimulating, whilst some others suggested that life in the country is healthier. Weaker essays failed to reach any discernible conclusion as to which style of living is more attractive.

Question 3 *El tiempo libre*

This was another reasonably popular title. Whilst a small number of essays simply described spare time activities, the best essays argued strongly that both physical and mental activity in our free time are vital for the promotion of a healthier lifestyle.

Question 4 *La guerra y la paz*

This title produced many good essays. Some candidates, however, merely stated the futility of war and consequently failed to examine the possible alternatives to conflict resolution. References to both world wars were common and some essays elected to analyse the situation in the Middle East in order to support their line of thought.

Question 5 *La contaminación*

Attempts at this title were generally well-illustrated and were able to examine the need for extensive controls to be put into place in order to restrict the harmful effects of atmospheric pollution. Most were convinced that the planet's future is safe, provided that we all contribute to the promotion of environmental awareness.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32
Essay

Key messages

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones humanas*

This was a popular title with candidates adopting a variety of approaches detailing the inevitability of the youth of today representing the future of the human race in a largely positive and optimistic manner. The best essays examined the sources of the negativity surrounding the image of young people today and also suggested ways in which they could be better prepared for the challenges of the future.

Question 2 *La vida rural y la vida humana*

This was a less popular title. Candidates suggested that it is inevitable that city dwellers distance themselves from nature, but then went on to discuss ways in which some links with nature could and should be preserved. Some even mentioned the possibility that increases in birth rates may well mean fewer rural areas being preserved when faced with the need, for example, to build houses, which was an interesting point.

Question 3 *El tiempo libre*

This was another reasonably popular title. Most essays argued the importance of leisure time being exploited appropriately for a variety of reasons - in particular that it can relieve the boredom some people experience in their chosen job. The desirable element of choice in terms of leisure time activities was also explored fully.

Question 4 *La guerra y la paz*

This title produced many good essays. The best essays offered points of view supported by specific references to the history of human failings exhibited by war and then going on to establish that war is likely to continue to be a shameful act. Some pointed out also that war can occasionally be the only way to deal with certain political situations, e.g. to overthrow a dictatorship.

Question 5 *La contaminación*

Those candidates who responded to this title were mostly able to include extensive references to the negative effects of pollution as well as to the many programmes currently operating in order to reduce such environmental damage. Very few essays suggested that the damage is so extensive that any attempts to reduce it would be futile.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33

Essay

Key messages

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones humanas*

This was not a popular title on the paper. Those who did select it produced decent pieces of writing with plenty of detail regarding the ways in which marriage has changed so much over the last several decades. Most expressed the feeling that marriage is indeed a positive element in modern society in that it can offer a degree of social stability.

Question 2 *La vida rural y la vida humana*

This was a popular title with most candidates taking the view that modern life is a real challenge regardless of whether one lives in the city or in the country. Both the positive and the negative aspects of city and country life were considered by candidates with many concluding that, if they were forced to decide for themselves, they would opt to live in the city because of the wide range of activities on offer. All felt, however, that rural life should be cherished at all costs.

Question 3 *El tiempo libre*

This was the least popular title on the paper. The conclusion reached by the small number of responses, however, was that meaningful and fulfilling activities undertaken in one's free time can only have a beneficial effect on the individual. We should, accordingly, appreciate the emotional value of the things we do in our free time more.

Question 4 *La guerra y la paz*

This title produced many well-argued essays. Some wrote about the need to avoid wars in the future in order to preserve mankind, whilst others felt that there was an element of inevitability to large scale conflicts. Some went on to point out that mankind has a habit of failing to learn from its own mistakes.

Question 5 *La contaminación*

This was a popular title, perhaps unsurprisingly. Candidates were well prepared for this topic and generally managed to avoid the temptation to write in very general terms about pollution and its negative impact on the planet. Most were absolutely convinced, without any shadow of a doubt, that it is still not too late to improve the situation with regard to pollution. The role of national governments was stated as a crucial element in terms of controlling environmental damage.