

SPANISH

Paper 1344/01
Speaking

Key messages

In the best prepared topic presentations and discussions candidates:

- presented their introduction naturally, even if pre-learnt
- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the topic
- provided evidence of research
- showed interest in and personal engagement with the topic
- supported opinions with evidence
- avoided sweeping statements.

Candidates should be prepared to:

- be interrupted
- be asked to support statements
- be asked unexpected questions
- be asked about the sub-headings in a different order to the one they submitted
- give examples
- be stretched linguistically to give of their best.

General comments

The general level of spoken Spanish was high. All of the candidates were fluent enough to sustain a conversation easily. Some common errors were evident which are listed below.

Most candidates had prepared their topics very thoroughly using a variety of sources and in many cases the quality of research was excellent. The very best presentations combined sound factual knowledge with clear analysis and well-founded opinion. In many cases, candidates conveyed a genuine interest in their chosen topic.

The discussions mostly flowed naturally, without an excessive use of recited, pre-learnt material. Candidates responded readily to the questions asked with suitable replies. The strongest performances were characterised by the ability to tackle unexpected questions with great aplomb and honesty and to engage in spontaneous conversation.

Some candidates had researched their topics extensively yet performed less well because they relied too much on a restricting recitation with a consequent lack of flexibility in discussion.

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

Comments on specific aspects

Topics

The topics were generally well-suited to an 8-10 minute discussion, being neither too broad nor too narrow. Examples of topics chosen were History, the Spanish economy, the film director Iñárritu, and several cultural topics connected to the region of Valencia. The very best went beyond the purely descriptive and provided some analysis or personal view, and their insights were convincingly supported.

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

Pronunciation

Pronunciation was good overall and in general did not impair communication. Candidates could improve their pronunciation by avoiding the most frequent errors which were:

- Pronunciation of *u* in words like *ataque, conquista guerra*.
- Anglicized initial vowels in words like *unidad, Europa, usar*.
- Soft *g* in words like *religión, ideología, legislar*.
- Voiced *s* in words like *decisión, desastre, represión*.
- Stressing the wrong syllable or vowel: *democracia, economía, país, bombardeos*.
- Aspirated *h*: *hombre, hablar, ahorro*.

Candidates should learn the pronunciation of words and names directly related to the topic they are presenting.

Grammar

Candidates could improve their grammar by attending to the following mistakes:

- Failure to conform to gender and number agreements between noun and adjective.
- Wrong gender, for example, *problema, tema, país, situación and solución*.
- Confusion between *ser/estar/haber*.
- Conjugation errors: missed subjunctives, preterite for imperfect, wrong person ending, radical changes in wrong tense (*empezó*).
- Incorrect use of *gustar*.
- Inability to distinguish between certain pairs of words: *nada/ningún, este/esto, bueno/bien, para/por, pero/sino, muerte/muerto*.
- Omission of *s* in the hundreds: **noveciento, *cuatrociento*.
- Use of cardinal instead of ordinal for kings and queens: *Carlos *tres, Fernando *ocho* instead of *tercero, octavo*.
- Wrong adjective endings: *violente, ridiculoso*.

Less common mistakes were the (very rare) unconjugated infinitives and invented participles such as, **hacido, *ponido, *vido*.

Vocabulary

The very best candidates demonstrated a wide ranging vocabulary which was sophisticated, accurate and specific. Weaker candidates tended to use more general and common words, for example *llevar a cabo/realizar actividades nocivas/perjudiciales* rather than *hacer cosas malas*. The following pairs of words were often confused:

- *policía/política*
- *tiempo/hora*
- *derecho/derecha*
- *nombre/número*.

Invented words, modelled on English, were also used: *resultado, demostraciones, involucrados*. *Las personas* was often heard in place of the more idiomatic *la gente*.

SPANISH

Paper 1344/02
Reading, Listening and Writing

Key messages

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

- focus on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- convey the required information in unambiguous language.

General comments

Some very good responses were seen in all three parts. On the whole a good level of understanding was expressed in relevant responses. Many candidates demonstrated a wide-ranging, accurate use of vocabulary and an ability to use complex sentence structures.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Listening Comprehension

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

Listening Text 1 was an item about a violent incident in Mexico. Candidates were given a printed summary of the extract with five gaps left blank. Below the summary was a choice of three words/phrases to complete the sentences and candidates had to underline the most appropriate option. The material was understood well by candidates and generally the correct options were chosen. Some candidates incorrectly chose *condujo* rather than *disparó* for **Question 4**. For this type of question, candidates need to be able to find and use Spanish synonyms.

The extract for **Listening Text 2** was an interview with Juan Mari Arzak, a famous chef from the Spanish Basque Country. 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. Most of the questions were understood and candidates wrote appropriate responses. For **Question 7** candidates needed to identify *se fundó el restaurant*. Candidates should avoid the first person *nuestro* in their answers. A first to third-person conversion was similarly needed in both **Questions 8** and **9**. For **Question 8** it was necessary to convert *no me gustó* to *no le gustó* and for **Question 9** the chef's reference to *mi madre* had to become *su madre* for the correct answer. Most candidates identified the correct information for **Questions 10** and **11** and gave good answers to **Questions 12** and **13**. The word *asesor* in **Question 14** caused difficulties for many candidates; they misunderstood Arzak's role and many gave the answer *tiene dos restaurantes* which was incorrect. Most candidates ended this task well by identifying the correct information for **Question 15**.

In **Listening Text 3** candidates heard a report about University candidates spending part of their degree course in other countries. Candidates on the whole answered the English questions correctly. Some candidates did not convey the information clearly enough in English to show their comprehension of the Spanish material. Some of the questions required two pieces of information and candidates must give all the information needed to gain the two marks. For **Question 16**, whilst most candidates correctly identified that the numbers were increasing, to gain the mark for the answer it was necessary to qualify this statement with an adverb such as "considerably" or "notably". Similarly, for **Question 17** "some of their study time" was needed. Most candidates gave good replies for **Questions 18, 19** and **20**. Some candidates performed less well in **Question 21** because of their weak English expression, giving responses such as "residency" for

“living costs” and “displacement” for “travel costs”. Candidates should use the appropriate English version of Spanish words. Most candidates ended the task well with appropriate answers to **Questions 22, 23 and 24**.

Part II: Reading Comprehension

There were three passages with reading comprehension questions in Spanish and 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 forest fire on the island of Ibiza. The material was understood by the candidates and the exercise, involving Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally well done. For **Questions 25 and 26** most candidates correctly changed *tercer* to *tres* and understood what the figure *1.450 hectáreas* referred to. **Question 27** required an explanation of what the 400 people had to do. Most candidates expressed this correctly. Similarly, most candidates produced the correct information for **Questions 28 and 29**. The majority of candidates communicated correct responses using their own words.

The passage used for **Reading Text 2** was a longer article about the new trend for tourist hostels 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 correctly and with confidence. As for the first reading task, candidates should use their own words rather than reproduce the original text word for word. They must also give the full information required to gain the marks available.

Reading Text 3 was an article about tango dancing in Buenos Aires and the increasing numbers of foreigners taking part in the dance competitions to the dismay of many locals. The material was generally well understood by the candidates, who answered the English questions in a fluent, comprehensible way. Most of the vocabulary in the passage was understood well by candidates. The word *abucheo* caused problems for many in **Question 38** and the word *aficionados* in **Question 39** referred to “amateur”, rather than the other meaning of “fans”. Many Spanish words have more than one meaning and candidates must identify the correct one according to the context of the passage. For **Question 40**, there were several possible answers allowed; so it was possible to gain the two marks without knowing the meaning of the word *bofetada*. All other questions were answered well by most candidates.

Part III: Guided Writing

Candidates are given a choice of two texts and have to write a response of 220-250 words in Spanish, based on a series of five bullet points. Candidates responded well to the material in the two extracts and wrote appropriate responses in a good level of fluent Spanish. The two options were equally popular and a variety of interesting essays were seen.

The first article discussed the findings of a recent United Nations report that the world is suffering unprecedented extreme weather conditions. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to the article and discussing the main world weather changes mentioned in the article, then give their opinion about climate change in their own country and whether governments or individuals should be responsible for protecting the environment. Finally, candidates were asked for a conclusion as to whether a solution exists to the problem of global warming. Candidates who chose this option were clearly familiar with the concepts and vocabulary needed and produced good answers.

The second article discussed the importance of physical exercise in modern life and the limitations of exercise alone if other lifestyle changes are not made. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to the article, giving their opinion as to the importance of physical exercise in modern life and then discuss whether children today do enough sport. They then needed to identify the most important health issues in their own country and, finally, offer a conclusion as to whether it is easy to maintain good health nowadays. There were some interesting responses to this task, with several candidates disagreeing with the article and giving good reasons why.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- 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;
- your Spanish answers must clearly make sense.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers clearly in 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 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

- Essential basic grammar knowledge is required. You should aim for responding in accurate language;
- know 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, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns correctly, 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;
- apply 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, for example, 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.