

Examiners' Reports

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HX77/R/11J

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Advanced Subsidiary GCE Spanish (H077)

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F721/01, 02, 03 Speaking

General Comments

This was the fourth examination for the new specification. Centres are asked to note the revised option codes for the speaking tests: option 01 is for centres uploading the mp3 file directly to the OCR Repository, and option 02 is for those wishing to send a CD of the tests to the marking examiner. In either case markers need the headed working mark sheet and topic form for each candidate and tests should be uploaded or sent for marking immediately. Where no candidate is present for the test it is still important to send the attendance register to the marking examiner.

Centres are reminded that the two parts of the speaking test – role play and topic discussion - are equally weighted at 30 marks each.

For part 1, the role play, stimulus materials should be given to candidates following the order given in the examiner's booklet.

Section 1 is essentially an interactive task-related exercise. There was a tendency in some centres for the teacher-examiner to treat the stimulus material as a comprehension test or to invite the candidate to summarise the information contained. Since up to fifteen marks are available for Use of Stimulus, candidates must of course be allowed to provide the relevant information from the material. The bullet points on the candidate / teacher-examiner sheets outline the specific areas for development. It is important, nevertheless, to allow a role play to develop and there must be significant interaction between the candidate and the teacher-examiner. Although the transmission of key information is important, the candidate's responsiveness and ability to persuade or give reassurance are important elements assessed in the mark scheme. Just inviting the candidate to summarise or translate the document, with little or no interaction, will not allow access to the full range of ten marks for Quality of Response.

As was usual, weaker candidates tended to depend quite heavily on the teacher-examiner to maintain the momentum of the exchange; the role play did not go beyond a series of questions and answers. However, many candidates managed to tailor the information to the actual needs of the teacher-examiner and remembered to recommend, suggest or reassure, and gained credit accordingly.

A number of candidates still found difficulty in phrasing even quite basic questions to obtain information from the teacher-examiner in the two introductory questions. Further practice in doing this would be beneficial.

The topic chosen for discussion in part 2 must refer to the Spanish-speaking context and be taken from the topic areas for AS given in the specifications. Where candidates wish to discuss a film or a book, the subject matter must clearly be shown to be relevant to the AS topic areas as listed in the specification and not be treated in isolation. Similarly, just summarising the story, describing the characters or style, or recounting a biography without showing how the information illustrates or is relevant to the topic area heading will not meet the specification requirements.

In part 2, the important element is "discussion". Although candidates may make a brief introductory statement, perhaps explaining why the topic is of interest or why it was chosen, this must not become a speech or presentation. The headings on the topic forms indicate the outline the discussion will follow but must not be treated as a script for pre-learned questions and answers.

As in the role play, interaction with the teacher-examiner is important and the discussion should be encouraged to develop. Grid E assesses qualities including responsiveness and spontaneity. Scripted questions with predictable answers and little development are therefore unlikely to score highly. We repeat previous advice to guard against over preparation of the discussion and that all candidates, in their own interests, should be given the opportunity to respond to the unexpected.

Grid D assesses relevant (i.e., to the specification) ideas and the candidate's ability to exemplify or substantiate such information and a point of view expressed. Most candidates had clearly invested a great deal of time and effort in looking into their topic – factual information was generally forthcoming and candidates rarely were at a loss for something to say. Less consistent was the evidence of ideas and opinions, or the ability to analyse rather than describe. Ability to deal with more abstract contexts was an important differentiator across the range.

Quality of language is assessed using Grid C1 in both sections. As might be expected, this varied considerably across the range, though very few candidates fell into the lowest category. Most candidates were at least in the middle or upper bands, particularly in part 2, where a greater degree of preparation was to be expected.

Teacher-examiners can greatly help their candidates by encouraging the use of as wide a range of language as possible, and avoiding the repeated use of similar patterns of syntax or questioning. Candidates should be expected to show competence in different tenses, registers, abstract / concrete contexts, etc., and generally show that they are able to extend the language beyond that encountered at GCSE. Although candidates showed for the most part a willingness to use their Spanish, accuracy in the more basic language with errors in verb endings, agreements and genders sometimes caused problems for otherwise quite good candidates.

Pronunciation was generally quite pleasing overall. Many candidates' pronunciation was good or very good and there was an evident attempt to sound authentically Spanish. There were some problems with intonation; incorrect stress, particularly when candidates were giving prepared answers, was also present.

Comments on Individual Questions

PART 1 – Role plays

Role play A was concerned with avoiding wasting food. The candidate's task was to explain the contents of the brochure and to persuade the teacher-examiner to follow the advice given.

The five main bullet points were: why wasting food was a concern, examples of the kind of food likely to be thrown away, how to use food most economically, advice on shopping and how to get more information.

Key vocabulary such as *malgastar*, *tirar a la basura*, *campaña* were given in the candidate's sheet. It is worth reminding candidates to note possibly useful items by studying the wording of the *tarea* and *situación* carefully during the preparation time.

Few candidates had problems in dealing with the essential context and the stimulus material was generally well understood and led to some productive exchanges.

Most candidates mentioned the quantity of food wasted, though not always per month, and fifty pounds was frequently expressed as "libres" or "libros", occasionally even "cuarenta" for "cincuenta". It's always worthwhile checking the numbers in role plays. Surprisingly few candidates, however, linked the idea of saving money yet eating wisely.

Most candidates coped with checking dates, though “datos” was frequently used. Not all candidates made a link with throwing away food because too much had been cooked, however. There were some ingenious ways of conveying “cutting loaves in two and freezing part” – “poner en la nevera” was commonly used, though many candidates knew “congelar”. Some prompting was often required to make the candidate give suggestions for what to do with leftovers, but once prompted, most were able to find suitable ways of conveying the ideas.

Candidates were generally ready to give details of how to obtain further information.

The extension questions were generally handled competently – sometimes more so than the content material – and allowed suitable differentiation between candidates. Ideas were also generally forthcoming

Role play B was a visit to a place of interest – a heritage industrial site and collection of museums. The task was to explain what Ironbridge had to offer and to convince the teacher-examiner that a visit should be made.

The five main bullet points were: explaining the nature of the place, its importance, its points of interest, details of entrance tickets and opening, and how to get more information.

Two key words, *hierro* and *porcelana*, were given in a glossary on the candidate's sheet.

The iron bridge itself was mentioned by most candidates, though not all referred to its being the first of its type in the world. The various attractions of the site were mostly identified, though the tunnels and workshops were sometimes overlooked. It was not always clear that all these attractions were in one large complex, or that you could buy a combined ticket to save money. The ability to decorate a plate was usually included, though many candidates omitted the fact that this referred to during school holidays.

The concept of “discover life of 150 years ago in an industrial town” proved to be a useful discriminator; many either overlooked this, or had trouble with expressing “150 years ago”.

Attempts to convey the opening times were usually made, though with varying degrees of linguistic accuracy: there was frequently confusion of *por / de (la mañana, tarde)*, or the use of *a / son* with times: “abre a son las diez”; many candidates mixed up the constructions *a diez a cinco / desde las diez hasta las cinco*. Open was frequently “*es abierto*”.

Candidates generally coped quite well with explaining or paraphrasing the quite challenging information about the “Enginuity Centre” and certainly managed to convey the essential ideas behind it.

Numbers and distances/directions were good discriminators, as on previous occasions: besides times mentioned earlier, confusion of *cien / ciento* “150 years”, “*cincuenta (or cuarenta) for cincuenta, miles for millas*”.

The open questions on whether studying history is worthwhile and on the importance of conserving the past allowed suitable scope for a range of ideas to be expressed, according to the ability of the individual candidate.

Role play C was concerned with staying healthy and coping with a heat wave. The task was to explain the contents of the stimulus material and to persuade the teacher-examiner to follow the advice given. The key expression *ola de calor* appeared twice on the candidate's sheet.

The five main bullet points included: explaining what a heat wave is, who is particularly affected, how to cope indoors, what you should do when outside, and obtaining further information.

Essential information was given quite readily, though only better candidates stressed the idea that a prolonged period of heat was relevant. Most people at risk were fairly readily identified, with the possible exception of people who worked outdoors, though a few candidates seized on this fact to personalise the information being given: *en tu / su caso, (te / le) es importante – para ti, usted, etc.*

Part of the task required some reassurance that, in spite of the heat, life could carry on – the best candidates noticed the “plan ahead / mostly common sense” of the stimulus material, though most candidates just tended to list precautions.

Occasionally candidates attempted to translate some of the expressions literally and ran into problems through uncertainty over how to form commands in Spanish; drink regularly, eat normally, stay in the shade, with confusion over second/third-person forms, reflexives and expressing negative commands.

The numbers in the text did not themselves cause difficulty, but dealing with times of day (as in the other role plays) did.

There were few vocabulary problems, though idiom was variable: “the hottest part of the day” was often *la parte más calor del (de la) día*; “hot drinks” – *bebidas calor(es)*; “salads and fruit” – *saladas y fruto*, and so on.

The extension questions again allowed for differing levels of ability and sophistication and were generally accessible to all.

F722 Spanish: Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General comments

The majority of candidates taking this January's Listening, Reading and Writing paper showed themselves to be of an appropriate level of ability. A range of marks was awarded with, as was to be expected on a mixed skills paper, candidates frequently displaying greater ability in one skill rather than another. At the higher end of the ability range the level of comprehension and written Spanish was often a pleasure to assess.

Among candidates of more modest ability there was often a noticeable difference between the marks scored for the receptive skills of listening (Tasks 1, 2 and 3), the objectively marked reading (Task 5) and the productive skill of writing. However, despite linguistic imperfections many such candidates gained credit when they were able to develop relevant ideas and opinions in their response to the essay question.

Most papers were well presented, although there were a few occasions where candidates' poor handwriting posed problems for assessors. Candidates are to be congratulated on their sound time management for this test, which the vast majority were able to complete.

Regrettably, there still appeared to be a number of candidates, especially those who have apparently been raised in a Spanish-speaking environment, who were unaware of the appropriate technique required by certain elements of the exam. This was especially apparent in Question 7, which is worth over one third of the total marks available. Several candidates, who had scored sufficiently well in the previous questions to give themselves an opportunity of reaching the highest grades, lost marks here.

Comments on Individual Questions

TAREA 1

Those candidates who listened carefully to the recorded text scored well on this question. Although several candidates scored maximum marks, many were tempted by distracting vocabulary, which fitted grammatically but was at odds with what was said on the recording. The pairings *cerca / lejos*, *nuevos / raros* and *nace / se alimenta* were commonly confused by those who were influenced too much by the written word.

TAREA 2

Marks scored for this second listening question were generally slightly higher than those for the previous one. Incorrect answers were commonly offered at the beginning and end of the exercise, with (a), (b) and (j) often being wrongly matched.

TAREA 3

The radio discussion on the benefits of running / jogging proved to be accessible to candidates and the majority were able to score at least half marks on this question. As always, candidates should be reminded that the task rewards not only understanding of what is said in the recording; a certain amount of precision is also required in expressing this understanding in English. The technique required is to write an exact translation of that part of the recording which answers the question.

- (a) Nearly every candidate successfully identified the question about runners' motivation.
- (b) This was also done well, with more colloquial answers, such as 'it's one of the best / natural ways of letting off steam' or 'chilling out', considered appropriate.

- (c) Identifying the three relevant adjectives should not have caused a problem, although *saludable* was occasionally not recognised. What was important, however, was to include the appropriate comparative or superlative forms in the answer. Three marks were not awarded to candidates who merely wrote 'pleasant', 'healthy' and 'cheap'.
- (d) *Otra moda pasajera* was a challenging phrase, which only the most able candidates successfully identified. It was commonly answered incorrectly as 'another way of transport / walking'.
- (e) (i) Although candidates frequently were able to pick out the verb *quedarse*, (a few mistook this for *quejarse*), not all of them were able to link this to the English expression 'here to stay'.
- (e) (ii) There were a lot more successful answers to the second part of this question, that running 'can help you to know / understand your own body'.
- (f) (i) The language again proved to be fairly accessible for this answer, although sometimes marks were lost for inadequate translations of *a plena capacidad*.
- (f) (ii) Many candidates were able to score one of the two available marks by noting that cardiovascular activity is the 'key to physical health'. The second mark was often missed through failure to note that this should be 'sustained'.
- (g) (i) This was generally done well, although a small minority of candidates got the two parts of the question the wrong way round.
- (g) (ii) A choice of answers was available here as, in addition to the need for a 'routine' / 'discipline', the man also stresses the importance of 'doing it' (running) and 'enjoying it'.
- (h) Answers which just stated 'in the afternoon / evening' were not credited unless qualified by 'every' / 'daily' / 'every day' etc.
- (i) Suitable English was needed to score this mark, with 'compromise' or 'obligation' not being considered as appropriate as expressions such as 'another commitment' or 'a conflict of interests'.

TAREA 4

In this transfer of meaning exercise good marks were commonly scored for communication. A substantial number of candidates overlooked the fact that they were addressing an internet forum and that a plural form of 'you', preferably *vosotros*, was required, (and certainly not phrases such as, *Quedo a la espera de sus gratas noticias* etc). The message required lots of switching between 'I' and 'you', and, although most candidates managed to convey the essentials, it was challenging to many in terms of quality of language scores. There was much confusion with *tiempo* for time and, surprisingly, several candidates used *medicina* or even *farmacia* for *doctor*. The phrase 'what about food?' proved a good indicator of skill in transferring meaning. The plural *ropas* was commonly used for 'clothes', although its related object pronoun often failed to agree. Expressing the concepts of 'anyone', 'any' and 'suggestions', also caused difficulties.

TAREA 5

This objective reading comprehension test was very well done by most candidates, with errors most frequently found in the last 3 answers. One or two candidates wrote eleven answers; in which case the final answer was disregarded, irrespective of whether or not it was correct.

TAREA 6

Answers to the questions in this exercise invariably require an element of language manipulation. It is not necessary to avoid language used in the text if this can be suitably manipulated to form an answer.

Candidates had a fairly good grasp of the text. However, there was a lack of comprehension by many candidates at the point in the text where the pilot releases the water from the helicopter. However, marks were often reduced by language errors. Even in a short answer comprehension question, considerable skill is required in manipulating the language. Some candidates seemed not to realise that defective language can give the wrong meaning or hinder comprehension by even the most sympathetic readers.

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify Luis's former profession and to supply an appropriate verb in the past tense.
- (b) The one-word answer *aburrido* was all that was needed, and was offered by many.
- (c) Any two of the concepts *quería un cambio*, *tiene mucha más acción*, or *hace algo de servicio público* were required. Most candidates scored at least one mark, usually for the idea of *acción*, although some failed to score the second mark when they offered a similar idea such as *era más emocionante* etc.
- (d) A surprising number of candidates were unaware of the word *bosque*. More ingenious ways of overcoming this lapse included *en las grandes zonas de árboles*, or by successfully using the adjective from the text as in *en sitios forestales*.
- (e) The expression *bien remunerado* was not always recognised. A few candidates gave no response at all, and others responded that we knew 'nada' about Luis's salary.
- (f) Luis's flying experience was usually identified, although answers were occasionally invalidated by *vuelto* instead of *volado*.
- (g) The speed with which pilots have to make decisions was readily noted as being stressful.
- (h) Similarly, the fact that firemen's helicopters have water containers proved very accessible.
- (i) and (j) were the most challenging questions in this exercise. The text states that 'it is necessary to prevent the helicopter from shooting upwards because of the loss of thousands of kilos of liquid'.

Hence, the answer to 'What happens to the helicopter when it releases the water?' needs to be something along the lines of 'it loses a lot of weight'. The reason why this might be a *momento crítico* is that the helicopter might rise abruptly. Many candidates missed the force of *hay que evitar que el helicóptero suba* and answered in (i) that the helicopter *suba* (sic) *bruscamente*, which then made it impossible to find a suitable answer for (j).

- (k) Despite the fact that the subjunctive *practiquen* was not required for the answer, it was commonly offered but was not considered to be a barrier to communication.
- (l) Filling the water containers was usually correctly identified.
- (m) Finding a suitable verb to accompany *máxima potencia* presented some problems in this question.

- (n) Many candidates overlooked the force of *para qué* in the question. The act of 'collecting water' needed to be included in the answer.

TAREA 7

It is always useful to draw attention to the techniques required in answering this question which is worth fifty marks. What is required in part (a) is a paraphrase of those parts of the stimulus text which answer the question which has been asked. There is no need to attempt to interpret the text, draw conclusions or offer any personal opinions. It is in part (b) where candidates are free to express as many ideas and viewpoints as they can come up with which are relevant to the answering the second question.

- (a) Those candidates who could show that they had understood what was legal at the various age groups in both countries and who could pick up on some of the motivation of young bullfighters usually scored comfortably in excess of half marks. Candidates with faulty technique usually went down one of two wrong tracks. Either they did a superb generalised comparison and synthesis but omitted significant details, or else they felt the need to comment or offer opinions on each point, thereby only covering two or three points and ending up with a low mark. There was widespread misunderstanding of *proyectar*, mistakenly believed to mean 'protect'.
- (b) It was pleasing to see that some candidates had made a quick plan or jotted a few notes before attempting this final part of the paper. Taking time to think round their answer often resulted in a good response, showing a personal response as well as exploring various ideas and opinions on dangerous activities, rather than immediately answering and only commenting on bullfighting. The best answers often started by exploring what exactly might be meant by *actividades peligrosas* and the responsibilities of parents towards their child's well-being. Many considered the importance of how old the child should be and also contributed some of their own relevant personal experiences.

As always, the best approach to this personal response question is to consider both sides of the argument and then decide which one should be favoured. Arguments for children taking part in hazardous activities at an early age included: the training and experience which will be valuable in later life; the financial rewards of more physical sports; sharper reactions when faced with danger; being in good physical condition as opposed to engaging in sedentary activities (although use of the computer was also justifiably seen as a potentially dangerous activity). Counter arguments were: childhood should be enjoyed in a conventional way; motivation often comes from the parent and not from the child; there should be age restrictions, as with smoking, drinking or driving. The general consensus was that a little bit of danger was acceptable, as long as it was adequately supervised.

A number of candidates did not broaden their answers beyond the topic of child bullfighters. To score well for 7(b) candidates must generate as many relevant ideas and opinions as they can and to develop these as far as is possible.

Quality of written language is assessed over both (a) and (b). Many candidates made an effort to think about the quality of their language and to include extended structures and vocabulary. Less able candidates wrote as they thought in English and then translated word for word. Those from a native Spanish-speaking environment tended to write as they would speak, often with very poor spelling but using the subjunctive successfully, probably without realising it.

Carelessness in correct forms and spelling was common, frequently with words taken from the stimulus passage. Common bullfighting vocabulary might have been expected to be known, but *torro*, *torre* or *toreo* frequently appeared for 'bull', accompanied by similar inaccuracies for 'bullfighter' or 'bullfighting'. Elsewhere, pairs of words which were frequently confused included: *pedir* for *perder*; *llegar* for *llevar*; *deportivo* for *deporte*; *sensible* for *sensato*.

However, as has been previously stated, better candidates often produced work which was a pleasure to read, and many linguistically less able candidates were able to produce interesting responses.

F724 Listening, Reading & Writing 2

General comments

The paper worked well and succeeded in allowing candidates to show their skills, ability and knowledge. It offered challenges to students across the range, with marks awarded evenly from the 40s to over 130 out of 140. There were no questions that were obviously too hard or too easy.

Surprisingly a certain number of candidates were not prepared for the target language tasks, with some scripts showing a fair number of “No response” marks where parts of questions had not been attempted. Perhaps less surprisingly, a certain number of candidates were not prepared for the essay, writing general essays based on vague knowledge or imprecise personal experience, rather than showing evidence of study.

Practical issues were to the fore in the examiners' minds because of the poor presentation by some candidates. Some candidates gave alternative answers, while others used brackets around part of the answer; candidates must be aware that in such cases, even if one answer is right, no marks can be awarded. The use of arrows and asterisks to indicate that material is to be found elsewhere does not sit well with the scanning process which enables on-screen marking.

Candidates need to be reminded to answer the questions in the space provided and to write on the lines provided. Some candidates persisted in copying out the questions on the answer line, with the answer then squeezed below the line or in the margin and not captured by the normal scanning process. In Tarea 4, a fair number of candidates wrote a verb in the space, only to cross it out and write another answer in the space above or below- and that answer was also sometimes replaced by a third attempt even further from the space intended for the answer. Good examination technique should avoid these problems. Generally speaking, on-screen marking probably favours candidates because it is possible to magnify poor or small handwriting; however candidates would surely do themselves no harm if they were to write legibly and in a suitable size of handwriting.

Comments on Individual Questions

TAREA 1

The written English of some candidates was not always clear and unambiguous; for example using *cost* for *coast*.

- (a) “Safe” was not accepted, as it has other connotations than *healthy*.
- (b) Candidates did not always read the question carefully and so answered about the environmental group or did not make it clear who carried out the inspections.
- (d) Some struggled to clarify the percentages here.
- (h) Some struggled to express the answer in comprehensible English.

TAREA 2

- (c) Many answers said that Spaniards very keen on mobile television.
- (f) In the 2nd part many answers said that Spaniards are currently using mobiles to watch television.
- (i) Many simply transcribed the question without answering it..

TAREA 3

This was mainly well done but some candidates did not read the rubric, writing out whole sentences or picking completely wrong words. There was careless copying of the correct answer in some cases.

TAREA 4

Some did this comprehension and grammar exercise well. Some did not use verbs. Some clearly did not know the preterite of regular verbs. Only the best managed an infinitive after *hasta*.

TAREA 5

The questions were generally answered well, although some were confused in (f) and (g).

TAREA 6

This question was surprisingly challenging, particularly the third and fourth items.

TAREA 7

The results of the transfer of meaning exercise were very mixed. Some candidates had trouble with *tener prisa*, where to put *discapacitados* in English (and how to render it) and the majority dealt incorrectly with *hace poco*. Too many opted always for the apparently obvious word, e.g. *salute incapacitated, contracted clients*.

TAREA 8

As with many questions on this paper, the need is to understand the text and manipulate the language so as to answer the question. Because of this need, (c) and (e) caused problems here.

TAREA 9

The best coped well, but many struggled especially with (a) and (c). Weaker candidates copied original words. The requirement was to show understanding in simple, correct Spanish.

TAREA 10

Many candidates answered well here particularly with (a), (c), (d), (e) and (h).

- (b) Candidates often failed to be precise over who they had had to deal with.
- (f) Some missed the idea of doing their best for disabled people or answered that they had been celebrating their success for years.
- (g) This was a challenging question, answered well by some.

ESSAYS

Candidates attempted a wide range of essays. There were some who knew exactly what was required: precise and relevant information about a Spanish-speaking country, with an argument to address the question, sometimes in a non-discursive context.

The wide-ranging titles were to be seen in the context of studying the topics listed in the specification; their open nature allowed candidates to select whatever aspect of the topic - with the relevant information – was appropriate to them. This needed to be written in correct and appropriate Spanish.

Some candidates used the titles to write essays that were only vaguely linked to the topic, and even less to the question, and that were somewhat rambling. Such essays often contained little information or argument and therefore scored low marks on the first 2 grids. Some candidates appeared to have little experience of formal writing in Spanish.

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