

SPANISH

Paper 8665/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The level of difficulty in the November 2007 Spanish Reading and Writing examination was fairly evenly spread throughout the paper. No single question proved to be more challenging or accessible than the others. Although a few less able candidates had difficulty finishing within the allocated time, the vast majority had no such problems. There were encouraging signs that Centres are coaching their candidates in the techniques which can enhance performance in this component. Familiarity with test types and the skills required can often boost outcomes by a grade or so. As always, candidates' performances covered the complete range of ability and there were many pleasing pieces of work submitted at all levels.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

A good technique for tackling this type of question (a test type which is in very regular use) is to copy out the phrase for which the equivalent is being sought. If the equivalent is then written alongside it is then possible to see how good a match has been found and, importantly, to see whether it contains surplus or insufficient material. On far too many occasions candidates successfully spotted the correct target but failed to pick up the mark when they added or omitted words. The **exact** equivalent is required to gain the mark.

Generally speaking, however, this question proved to be a fairly gentle, familiar start to the paper with none of the targeted phrases appearing to be more elusive than its fellows.

Question 2

As with **Question 1**, it is a good idea to write the phrase down before attempting the required manipulation. Candidates can then see at a glance whether their answer contains all the elements of the original. The best way to check if the task has been accomplished is to try to fit the answer into the original text and see if the original meaning is retained.

- (a) This was not the first time that candidates have been asked to convert *al + infinitive* to *cuando + indicative* and many correct answers were received. The commonest error was the use of the preterite tense, which would not fit in the original text.
- (b) A wide variety of versions was offered, with the two most acceptable being *los juegos se suceden uno tras otro* and *a este juego le sucede uno tras otro*. Some candidates spoiled an otherwise correct answer by adding an unnecessary *y luego otro*.
- (c) There were many possible ways to answer this question, using either the subjunctive or the indicative forms of *tener*, *cumplir*, *alcanzar* or *llegar a*. A not uncommon error was to make the verb plural, which again would not fit back into the original text.

- (d) This was another question which allowed for many variations of answers, with *falta* being permissible as either a verb or a noun form. The essential requirement was to retain the idea of 'they lack', and this could be successfully rendered by: *les falta / les hace falta* or *tienen / sufren (de) (una) falta* etc.
- (e) By contrast, this manipulation offered very few alternatives and they all hinged on recognising that *sueña* was a verb form and it must take the preposition *con*. The simplest answer was *sueña con validar...*, although some admirable subjunctive versions were also submitted, for example, *sueña con que se validen...*

Question 3

The text was fairly accessible to candidates and few appeared to encounter difficulties in locating the information being sought. Most seemed to be aware that 'lifting' chunks of text for their answers would not score marks and there were many noteworthy attempts at paraphrase. Several candidates quite legitimately made use of the phrases offered for manipulation in the previous exercise.

- (a) Most candidates picked up a comfortable two marks here by successfully defining the 'baby test'. Only a few scored the third mark available for attempting to rephrase '*nombre casero*'. Among the better attempts at this were: *común, vulgar, no científico, informal* and *más conocido*.
- (b) The fact that other tests only measure the results whereas this test measures the processes seemed to be widely understood. As long as four consecutive words were not 'lifted' from the text in answering, then another two marks were readily available.
- (c) (i) Again, the reference material in the text proved easy to locate. A few candidates failed to pick up the maximum two marks available, with lack of elaboration on *razones orgánicas y socioambientales* being the principal cause.
- (ii) This question proved more of a challenge, requiring candidates to identify the causes of *retrasos* and to link them to all three social classes. Lack of attention amongst the upper classes was commonly noted although malnutrition amongst the poor was often not so clearly picked out. Premature birth among the middle classes was very frequently ignored.
- (d) As was to be expected, this question attracted a wide variety of answers. Provided that candidates did not panic when confronted by the perhaps unfamiliar word *hipoteca*, the idea behind the remark should have been reasonably accessible. Answers containing the idea that the authorities should act now to protect children for the future's sake collected both marks. A not uncommon misinterpretation was that more than half the children of Venezuela are malnourished.
- (e) Only a very few candidates successfully identified the three elements needed to pick up full marks for this question. If correctly paraphrased, 'all Venezuelan children should have the same opportunities' gave at least one mark. Only rarely did candidates note both the other elements: 'the test should be adopted as a measure of development' and 'the authorities should respond'.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The passages from the text needed to answer the questions were quickly identified by the majority of candidates. However, it should be remembered that if a question is worth five marks it is unlikely that a two line answer will suffice.

- (a) Most candidates correctly identified the increase in the number of caesarean operations although not so many claimed the extra mark by noting the declining birth rate in Spain or the recommendations of the WHO.
- (b) As long as the original text was successfully paraphrased, doctors' explanations were readily identified and many candidates scored well on this question.

- (c) This question turned out to be more of a challenge. Many candidates, including not a few native speakers, appeared blissfully unaware that *innecesáreas* was a misspelling of *innecesarias* and therefore a play on words. Those who did spot this and linked it to the theme of the text of whether caesarean operations are necessary or not scored both marks.
- (d) Of a similar nature to **Question (b)**, marks were readily available for successful paraphrasing. As stated earlier, some candidates need to be reminded that questions worth five marks require longer answers than questions worth two.
- (e) This was generally answered well, despite the presence of some irrelevant material taken from the first sentence of the paragraph.

Question 5

Although the rubric clearly states that answers should not exceed 140 words, there are still candidates who choose to disregard this and, as a result, end up scoring zero for their Personal Response. The ideal balance for this question should be 90-100 words for the Summary and the remainder for the Response.

- (a) Marks should be easy to come by in this exercise for those who can write concisely and to the point. No penalties for 'lifting' are applied, and all that is required is for the candidate to note succinctly the key points of the texts – many of which will have come up earlier as answers to **Questions 3 and 4**. This is not the place to offer personal opinions, nor is there room for any generalised introduction or indeed, any generalisation whatsoever. Words are at a premium. Lines such as 'the first text tells us about the causes of *retrasos*' or 'the second text gives lots of reasons for caesareans' will score no marks. What is needed are the causes and the reasons. On far too many occasions, candidates who had performed well in other parts of the paper failed to do themselves justice here.
- (b) In this exercise candidates need to try to introduce more than one idea or opinion into two or three sentences. This is not an easy task. However, it is not a good idea to begin by saying something like '*No sé mucho del cuidado de los niños en mi país!*' If bereft of in-depth knowledge, it is far more profitable to invent a point of view.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/04

Texts

General comments

Examiners found the standard to be similar to that of previous sessions, although a greater number of candidates were able to answer three questions satisfactorily. In terms of preparation, Centres are advised that many candidates did not answer part (iii) of **Question 1(a)** fully because they needed to refer to the text as a whole – practice of this type of question would be very helpful. Also, candidates do not need to quote at length from the given extract.

Handwriting continues to present a significant problem as Examiners struggle to decipher answers. Candidates are clearly putting themselves at a disadvantage if their work cannot be read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Pérez Galdós – *Doña Perfecta*

- (a) Candidates found enough material in the extract to answer parts (i) and (ii), but found it more difficult to discuss the extract in the context of the whole work in answer to part (iii).
- (b) The better answers developed into a discussion of the theme of hypocrisy generally in the book. A few candidates digressed into spending too long discussing what is meant by 'Christianity'.

Question 2: Isabel Allende – *Eva Luna*

- (a) Although many candidates chose this question, surprisingly few were able to relate the extract to a more wide-ranging discussion of the novel as required in part (iii).
- (b) There were many excellent answers to this question. In fact candidates found almost too much material and there were a few who had difficulty organising it. The material was used to support a wide variety of angles and arguments. The best were able to see how revolutionary Allende's subject matter and treatment was against its cultural background.

Question 3: Vargas Llosa – *Los jefes/Los cachorros*

- (a) Parts (i) and (ii) presented no real problems. Answers to part (iii) sometimes failed to go beyond the surface, and lacked depth and detail.
- (b) Candidates showed a good knowledge of all the stories. Some had difficulty selecting material and forming a coherent argument. Weaker answers tended to consist of a list of the presence/absence of parental influence in the various stories, without enquiring into the significance of this, which would have taken the discussion to the next level. The best answers recognised that a feature of adolescence is identification with the peer group values which often contrasted with those of the parents.

Question 4: Fernán-Gómez – *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

- (a) There were disappointing responses to both questions on this play, but especially to **Question (a)**. Many candidates chose this text but few of them were able to recall enough detail or to apply it. The result was thin answers, especially to part (i), while answers to part (iii) failed to make reference to the whole work. In the case of some candidates, it was difficult to discern how well they really knew the play or to what extent they were improvising on the basis of the extract. Some answers were a general discussion of the experience of living through a war with no specific references to the text at all.
- (b) Although there were some very good answers to this question, some weaker candidates interpreted the question too abstractly and did not relate it closely enough to the play's characters.

Question 5: García Márquez – *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*

- (a) This question was popular and there was a variety of different but good treatments. Candidates showed detailed knowledge of the text.
- (b) This question was also very popular and was generally well answered, although a number of candidates interpreted the question in too abstract and general a way rather than confining their answers to the characters in the book.

Question 6: Lope de Vega - *Fuenteovejuna*

- (a) There were many good and well-argued answers to this question. Perhaps the most successful were those that took a chronological approach, rather than a simple 'yes' or 'no' treatment.
- (b) Although not many candidates chose to answer this question, there were some good analyses of Esteban's role. It is, of course, acceptable to challenge the statement in the question, but candidates cannot then write a whole essay on a different character.

Question 7: García Lorca – *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

- (a) This question proved the most straightforward and popular, with everyone putting forward approximately the same argument.
- (b) Fewer chose this question, which was a pity because it prompted some interesting and original discussion.

NB – Examiners do not expect candidates to have detailed knowledge of the historical period in which the text was set, but if a particular point is made, it must be accurate. Many candidates were unaware of the chronology of the Spanish Civil War and believed that Franco was in power before Lorca died.

Question 8: Machado – *Campos de Castilla*

- (a) There were few answers to this question.
- (b) Although few candidates chose this question, those that did found it straightforward, and produced good and well supported essays.