

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

AEA

AEA Spanish (9881)

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Candidates were required to complete a single three-hour written examination. This year's paper had the central theme of "The Spanish Language". All the texts and listening material contained in the paper related to that theme and the options for the extended writing tasks were based around it. There were several texts, of different styles, with a variety of register.

Assessment Principles

Candidates' performance is assessed positively, with the following weighting: 15% Reading comprehension, 10% Transfer of meaning into English, 15% Linguistic tests, including 5% for a cloze test, 10% Listening comprehension and 50% Extended Writing.

Candidates' Responses

In general, the candidates' performance reflected a positive response to this final Advanced Extension Award examination. There were some excellent answers, centres had clearly prepared candidates well and most scripts reflected an appropriate level of competence and knowledge. The majority of the candidates were able to finish the paper within the allotted time and there were few examples of unfinished scripts. Only a small number of candidates were inappropriately entered for this examination.

Primera Sección

Texto A was an academic text by Rafael Lapesa about the Spanish language in Latin America. Two linguistic exercises were set on the passage. Exercise 1 involved finding synonyms. Most candidates scored well on this exercise and found all or most of the words successfully. Exercise 2 required definitions of phrases from the text. Several candidates gave full, excellent definitions but others were let down by a lack of comprehension or some basic Spanish language errors.

Texto B featured a news item about the use of the Spanish language on the internet and the 2007 decision for the world-wide web to accept the "Ñ", symbol of the Spanish language. This exercise was a cloze test. Most candidates understood the material and were able to choose the correct words. There was some inevitable confusion over *hay* and *haya*, *esté* and *está*, and *da* and *dé*, but most candidates did well and scored highly on this question. Candidates needed to show comprehension as well as grammatical skills here and many were successful in doing so.

Texto C featured a newspaper report about the diversification of languages within the European Union. There was a Reading Comprehension exercise set on the passage, with answers to be given in Spanish. Most candidates had a general understanding of the text and many gave full answers. This exercise required candidates to give information and to make inferences, but some were too reliant on "lifting" from the text without explaining. Words such as *ampliaciones*, *mayor concentración* and *demográfico*, etc. needed explaining. Generally, however, there was evidence of an improved performance in the Reading Comprehension, with fewer candidates leaving blanks and most understanding the material well.

The answer was then marked for Quality of Language. There was a wide range of performance here, with the weakest candidates failing to use correct verb forms, gender, agreements, etc., whereas, some of the strongest candidates succeeded in using an excellent level of language. Several of the questions gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate complicated verb forms.

Texto D was a second extract from the newspaper report. This required a transfer of meaning exercise. Whilst the Examiners were not seeking a highly-polished piece of English prose, they were seeking a high standard of transfer of meaning. Most candidates clearly understood the material and wrote a sound version in English. However, weaker candidates had difficulty with tenses and particular lexical items, such as *el mito de Babel, de un vistazo, un axioma, el borrador, asuntos comunitarios*, etc. Whilst the weakest candidates found it difficult to translate common expressions, such as *no obstante, imprescindibles, pasa página, cuantos más ... mayor será* etc., the Examiners saw some polished and accurate translations.

Segunda sección

In the Listening comprehension text candidates are required to listen to the interview and to retrieve and convey information in their own words. Candidates have individual control of the recording: they may stop, rewind and replay the recording at will, and they may make notes and write their answers at any point. It is not necessary to write in full sentences and there are no extra marks awarded for quality of language in this task. Marks are awarded for answers that show comprehension and which contain facts and information.

Texto E featured an interview with the Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez, with a Listening Comprehension exercise set on it. Most candidates gave a pleasing performance and exhibited a high level of comprehension skills. Few lexical items caused problems. Most candidates understood the gist of the material and few failed to score on any of the questions, but it was necessary to give full information to gain the full marks each time. It was pleasing to see that fewer candidates relied on transcribing the whole interview this year and that there was a better attempt to use their own words. Even so, an explanation was required and no marks could be awarded for simply repeating such phrases as *no puede decirse en qué lugar se habla un mayor español, es maravilloso para sus visitas, una unidad regional construida sobre los valores de cada país*, etc. Overall, however, the standard of Listening comprehension skills displayed was very high, with candidates understanding both the gist and the detail of this passage with its quite demanding lexis and register.

Tercera sección

The Extended Writing question carries half the total marks for the examination and draws on the other parts of the paper. Candidates are expected to devote half of the time to this task, about 90 minutes, and ensure that they plan it carefully. Candidates are required to write about 450-500 words, although they may write more if they wish. There was a choice of two tasks. This year, although the discursive essay was the more popular of the two, there was an increase in the number of candidates who opted for the creative essay. There were some highly successful essays written for both.

Question (a) was a creative essay. Candidates were expected to study the texts and consider the issues involved. There were many references that could be picked up and others introduced: all the issues that García Márquez raised in the Listening

exercise, as well as the growth of Spanish in the world, relations between Spain and Latin America, relations between Latin America and the US, Spain's position in Europe, the growing importance of English in the world, the increasing Latin American population, the US film industry, etc. The essay should be in the form of a dialogue and the appropriate register should be maintained throughout. The initial decision as to the use of *tú/usted* was crucial, as was the ability to maintain this. Good candidates provided a contrast in language between the young student and the older writer. It was very important to consider the language used by Gabriel García Márquez in the Listening exercise. There were some excellent responses to this question and some candidates succeeded in conveying the tone and register of the Colombian writer's speech very well. The best essays demonstrated a high level of creative flair and originality.

Question (b) was a discursive essay discussing the prospects for the Spanish language in the 21st century. Candidates were expected to make reference to the material contained in the different texts in the paper and to use the vocabulary and ideas expressed therein. The texts contain references to the Spanish language of Spain and Latin America, the growth in the number of learners of Spanish, Spanish and internet use, the effect of European organisations on the Spanish language, etc. Although the candidates are free to introduce new ideas not contained in the texts, it is expected that the bulk of the essay will refer specifically to the Spanish language, in Spain, Latin America and the world. A thorough discussion of the issues is expected and the essay should be written in the appropriate language of a discursive essay, with the language of argument and debate. The essay should be structured in a logical way, leading to a conclusion summing up the situation and the candidate's personal opinion. Generally there was a high level of performance in this essay. Whilst most candidates succeeded in writing organised essays which fulfilled the tasks with an appropriate level of accuracy and range of lexis and structures, unfortunately, some candidates produced essays that relied too heavily on the previous texts and repeated those ideas without further development. There was, however, a clear indication that the majority of candidates had followed advice and made pertinent references to the other texts. There were some excellent essays, full of knowledge, well-argued and using accurate, skilful language and a wide range of lexis and structures.

Conclusion

This is the eighth and final year of the Spanish AEA examination. Over the years it has been a pleasure for the Examiners to see such a high standard of performance in this demanding examination paper. Congratulations to all the successful candidates who have taken on this additional intellectual challenge.

Statistics

AEA Spanish

Grade	Max mark	Distinction	Merit
Boundary Mark	200	147	122

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