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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Spanish (WSP04) Paper 01
Research, Understanding and Written Response

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Introduction

There was a slight increase in the number of candidates taking Unit 4 this summer. The standard was high, with many very good to excellent performances. The comprehension questions were answered well and candidates showed clear understanding of the listening and reading passages. Only a very small minority of candidates did not manage to complete the paper or left questions blank. Written expression in Spanish was very good, often excellent, with only the occasional exception.

At times, examiners struggled to read candidates' handwriting. Examiners always mark positively and give students the benefit of the doubt, but if poor handwriting prevents meaning from being conveyed, then the marks will be lowered.

Section A - Listening

Question 1 was taken from the topic of Society in the Spanish Speaking world. The majority of candidates coped well with this question. The question which most frequently caused difficulty was (b).

Question 2 was from Lifestyle, Health and Fitness and caused students few difficulties. The most common error was (b).

Question 3 - many students scored full marks on this question. Occasionally, the incorrect answer '*cocina*' was given instead of '*sirve*' for (c).

Question 4 - taken from the topic Technology in the Spanish-speaking world was mostly well done. For (a) some students focused on the lack of specialised personnel. '*No tienen personal especializado*' was not accepted without mention of a consequence. In (b) some students did not score the mark because they omitted the reference to private companies. (c) was a challenging question which required students to infer meaning: some responses mentioned the arrival of new products but failed to explain the consequence or adverse effects – the loss of jobs or the ousting of private companies from the market. For (d), the best responses simply answered '*No usa la tecnología*' which was enough to get the mark. (e) was mostly well done, but often students lacked the precision of 'fewer than 50%'. For (f) most students managed both answers correctly. Some failed to get the idea of paid apprenticeships or said that the apprenticeships were 'gratis'.

Section B - Reading and Grammar

Question 5 - was generally well done. The question most likely to be answered incorrectly was (c), as students did not correctly distinguish between '*la calle*' and '*en la puerta de una clínica*'.

Question 6 - In (a), simply saying that shops and businesses worked normally or that the strike had no impact at all without reference to how the workers were affected, did not score. Most students correctly answered (b) '*en la región*' was needed for the mark. (c) was a challenging question which required students to explain how the mood of the group had changed. Many simply referred to the action of throwing eggs at the shop windows or the arrival of another group and failed to mention the change of mood. For (e), some students simply answered that the number was surprising because there were fewer participants than in previous demonstrations, however many understood that that it was because it took place on a mid-week or a working day. In (f), there were some incomplete answers referring to playing games with each other but not mentioning that the activity took place in the street.

Question 7 - (a) incorrect answers said that 23 Colombian schools use the system. This answer did not show that the programme was expanding. The required answer was that schools in neighbouring countries have begun to use the system. (b) and (c) were mostly well answered. (d) was a challenging question and some students did not understand that the school refers to the national academic plan to determine the academic standard of new students. Nearly all students picked up the mark in (e) by referring to different ages within classes. For (f), most students simply answered '*la tecnología*' which was enough to get the mark.

For (g), some students offered '*un plan personalizado*', which did not communicate either of the two key ideas. In (h) most students understood that flexibility was convenient for parents because they could choose hours that suit them. Some students incorrectly referred to taking responsibility for their own lives or choosing their own rest periods.

Some students did not get the mark for (i) as they gave incomplete answers, saying only that teachers '*reciben un salario*' without mentioning specifically that they did not teach lessons or mark exams at home.

Question 8 differentiated well. It is important that students know that they must aim to communicate the whole meaning of the prompts without adding or changing any of the sense of the phrase. Some students offered grammatically correct sentences, but did not score as their answers changed the meaning of the given prompt.

(a) Mostly well done although some simply wrote '*Vivía en el edificio*'.

(b) '*huevos estando/siendo/estaban...*' did not score. Only " *fueron*" was accepted. Students should manipulate only the targeted structures and should not substitute other words for those given e.g. '*lanzados*' for '*tirados*'.

(c) '*flexibilidad*' had to be incorporated into the sentence. Responses such as '*Hay nuestro programa de estudios flexible*', were not accepted.

(d) The passive voice was targeted in this question. A common mistake was *'está construido'*.

(e) Not all students used the subjunctive. A correct construction with *'para'* and the infinitive was an acceptable alternative. e.g. *'Aprender a buscar es esencial para el estudiante'*.

(f) Common mistakes were failing to use the future tense, mis-spelling of *'repetir'* e.g. *'repitir'*, *'repentir'* or other incorrect constructions, such as *'se a repetido'*.

(g) Well answered with most students offering the subjunctive.

(h) Some students confused the gerund with the past participle and gave the incorrect answer *'se está demostrando'* or the miss-spelling *'demonstrado'*.

(i) Several alternatives were accepted, but a subjunctive verb was required e.g. *'cuando finalice/termine el mes'*.

(j) Many students added *'todavía'* to an otherwise correct answer.

Section C - Essay

There were many very good essays, although few students managed to reach the top marks on all criteria. The best essays were a pleasure to read; they were informative, detailed and the arguments were clear and easy to follow.

Many students showed an excellent knowledge of the topic or work they had studied. There were some impressive essays which drew on literary articles and criticisms, however, it is important that students demonstrate that they have formed a personal response, and do not simply repeat other people's ideas.

The quality of language in the majority of essays was very good. Many students were able to write in a sophisticated register, using language appropriate to writing about film, literature, history and geography. In some cases students used an informal register not appropriate to essay writing. Spelling, accent and punctuation errors sometimes affected the clarity of the communication.

A considerable number of candidates scored highly on the content and communication, but not as well for critical analysis, organisation and development. Generally points were explained and evidenced, but examiners noted insufficient analysis. To score highly on the Critical Analysis grid (AO4), students need to justify their points of view with explanations and evidence such as facts and quotations. They need to link each idea back to the question. This approach avoids largely descriptive, story-telling type responses.

Regarding the quality of introductions and conclusions in the essays, many either missed an introduction or wasted word count with superfluous information. Moreover, the lack of a clear conclusion prevented some of the responses from accessing the higher marks for AO4.

Question 9a

There were good essays here with lots of well-researched information on the Basque countries, Valencia, Andalucía and Venezuela. The weaker essays concentrated on tourism and could easily have been written by anyone who has no specific knowledge but is content to talk about weather and beaches and the occasional fiesta that attracts tourists.

Question 9b

Strong essays provided plenty of researched demographic information. Others were significantly shallower and simply repeated that town and city dwellers tend to migrate to the beaches to escape from their urban lives.

Question 10a

Several students chose to talk about the Franco years and the effect that the dictatorship had upon the population; repression, censorship, the subservience of women etc.

Question 10b

There were some informative and interesting essays. Some students wrote about the Reyes Católicos and how they unified the country and changed the course of Spain's history. Others chose to write about the approval of the Spanish Constitution of 1931 or the transition to democracy.

Question 11a

The best essays carefully analysed the relationship between Tita and Mamá Elena with many relevant references and quotes that clinched the point. Even where candidates had produced a mainly descriptive account of events in the novel, most did include some analysis of the relationship between the two characters and responses showed good depth. Evidence for this essay was also good in general.

Question 11b

There were some good essays focusing on the traditional roles of women again with close reference to the text. The majority of essays focused on the de la Garza family tradition of the youngest daughter caring for the mother until her death and the traditions of Mexican cooking.

Question 12a and b

Very few students chose to answer on this work.

Question 13 a and b

There were no responses on this work.

Question 14a

Stronger essays included many relevant references to the text and showed how the lack of food affected the characters and their relationships. The less successful responses lacked supporting evidence or simply retold the story.

Question 14b

Fewer students chose this question but those who did, demonstrated a good understanding of how Dolores and Manolita change during the Civil War. There was a tendency to omit the analysis of whether the changes were negative or positive.

Question 15a

Very few students chose to answer on this option.

Question 15b

Essays focused on Yerma's longing for a child and Juan's refusal to give her what she wants and needs. The most successful work clearly explained Yerma's feelings of frustration. A common error was failing to analyse the extent to which the ending was effective. Only few students succeeded in making the necessary evaluative judgment.

Question 16a

El Laberinto del Fauno was one of the most popular works. There were some strong essays on disobedience with plenty of relevant references to the film sequences and quotations from characters. In the less successful essays, students failed to mention Ofelia at all or did not manage to link disobedience to virtue.

Question 16b

Another popular question. Students mainly choose to describe the giant toad, the pale man and the faun. Some successful essays showed good critical analysis by drawing parallels between monsters in the magical realm and those in the real world.

Question 17a

A very popular question which was generally answered well. In some cases responses for 17a did not fully address the second part of the question '*Analiza la importancia de su papel en la película*'. Some essays mentioned other characters and their relationship with Merche but did not link back to the question of the importance of her role in the film.

Question 17b

A less popular question but those who chose to answer it managed to cover relevant information relating to how the symbolism in the film contrasts the Basque and Andalusian cultures.

Question 18a and b

There were only a small number of responses on this work.

Question 19a

Students often gave detailed observation of the religious symbols, scenes such as the moment in the church when Maria seeks guidance, knowing she is pregnant and the moral struggles she faces throughout the film.

Question 19b

This question allowed students to chose scenes which they thought were key moments in the film. Popular choices included the scene in which María swallows the drugs and in the clinic when she has an ultrasound scan and hears her baby's heartbeat. The strongest responses analysed the significance of the chosen scenes, rather than simply describing what happened.

Question 20a

Most essays successfully explained why Sebastian wanted to make the film. The effect of historic events on the filming was not as well explained as candidates tended to describe the events rather than to analyse their effect on the film.

Question 20b

There were only a small number of responses to this question.

Advice for future series

Be sure to address the '*Analiza...*' part of the essay question.

Avoid including factual inaccuracies and unrealistic statistics, e.g. 750 million people killed in the Spanish Civil war.

Geography and history essays must refer to Spanish speaking countries.

Responses about other countries are unable to score.

Write clearly and legibly in all questions.