



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2008

SPANISH

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. General Introduction

1.1 General Comments on the syllabus

The syllabus has been in operation for the past number of years and the most recent Chief Examiner's Reports for Junior Certificate Spanish were prepared following the 1999 and 2002 examinations. The syllabus is available on the website of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie) in the section headed 'Curriculum, Syllabus & Teaching Guides'.

1.2 Examination Format

The Junior Certificate examination in Spanish is examined at two levels, Ordinary and Higher. The examination comprises four components: Reading Comprehension, Written Production, Listening Comprehension and an optional oral examination that is taken by a small percentage of candidates. The first three components are compulsory and are examined in June, while the fourth component is examined in April or May. All candidates are tested in the skills of listening comprehension, reading comprehension and written production. The marks are allocated as follows:

	Higher Level	Ordinary Level
Part 1: Listening Comprehension	140 marks	140 marks
Part 2: Reading Comprehension	100 marks	120 marks
Part 3: Written Expression	80 marks	60 marks
Total marks for candidates not taking oral	320 marks	320 marks
Oral examination (Optional)	80 marks	80 marks
Total marks for candidates taking oral	400 marks	400 marks

1.2.1 Oral Examination

The optional oral examination is school based and is usually examined during the final school term. This part of the examination is assessed by the teacher. The duration of the test is between five and ten minutes and teachers may choose to use their own format or to use the format suggested by the SEC. This consists of two parts:

a)	General Questions	32 marks	(8 x 4 marks)
b)	Role Plays (or Tasks)	48 marks	(2 x 24 marks)
(Total = 80 marks)			

Where a teacher chooses to use his/her own format, a copy of this and of the marking scheme are forwarded to the SEC.

The results of this optional examination are forwarded to the State Examinations Commission before the end of the academic year. The performance of candidates is recorded. These recordings are retained in the schools and must be made available to the State Examinations Commission if so requested.

The number of candidates choosing the optional oral examination in 2008 was 56. Of these, 12 candidates took the option at Ordinary Level and 44 at Higher Level. This compares to a total of 3 candidates who took this option in 2002 when the last Junior Certificate Chief Examiner's report was prepared.

1.2.2 Written Examination

The duration of the written examination at both levels is two and a half hours. The comprehension sections of the paper may be answered in either Irish or English.

Part 1 of the Junior Certificate Spanish examination begins with a Listening Comprehension/Aural Examination of approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes duration. The Aural Examination is divided into the following sections at both levels:

- A - *Diálogos*
- B - *Unos anuncios*
- C - *Una noticia*
- D - *Descriptivo*

The aural examination CD has the same content for Ordinary and Higher levels. However, different questions are asked of the candidates at each level reflecting the different degrees of difficulty involved in the two examinations. The aural examination

is followed immediately by the written examination which continues for approximately two hours.

Part 2 is Reading Comprehension which is usually divided into three sections, as follows:

At Ordinary Level, Section A tests candidates' vocabulary skills. Section B contains a number of short comprehension passages, while in Sections C and D, the comprehension passages are somewhat lengthier.

At Higher Level, Sections A and B test candidates' vocabulary skills. Sections C and D examine skills over a wide range of varying comprehension passages with a significant Spanish or Hispanic cultural content.

Part 3 at both Higher and Ordinary Levels is Written Expression which tests the ability of candidates to express themselves accurately in the target language.

1.3 Candidatures 2004 – 2008

A total of 1413 candidates took the examination at Ordinary Level in 2008, while 3072 candidates took Higher Level.

The following table shows the numbers taking Spanish at each level since 2004:

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Ordinary Level	875	1004	1243	1385	1413
Higher Level	2157	2353	2685	2866	3072
Total	3032	3357	3928	4251	4485

Table 1: Numbers taking Spanish at Junior Certificate Ordinary and Higher Levels 2004 -2008.

Since 2004, the numbers presenting for Spanish have increased each year at both Ordinary and Higher levels. The statistics show an increase in numbers of almost 50% in five years. This represents an increase of approximately 290 candidates annually and indicates that the subject is experiencing significant growth at present.

To put these figures in perspective it is worth noting that when the Junior Certificate was first introduced in 1992, a total of 1943 candidates presented for the examination at both Ordinary and Higher levels. This figure rose slowly over the following seven years to 2131 in 1999, an average increase of 26 candidates per year for that period.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

The analysis of candidate performance and the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are based on the detailed reports submitted by the Assistant Examiners and the Chief Advising Examiner at Ordinary Level. It is hoped that this report on the 2008 Junior Certificate Examination in Spanish will be helpful to both students and teachers in their classroom practice as they prepare for examinations in the coming years.

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the following:

- The Junior Certificate Spanish syllabus which can be accessed in *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools 2000/2001* and on the Department of Education and Science website (www.education.ie)
- The 2008 Junior Certificate Examination Spanish Listening Comprehension CD
- The 2008 Junior Certificate Examination Spanish Ordinary Level Written Paper
- The Marking Scheme for the 2008 Junior Certificate Spanish Ordinary Level Written Paper which can be downloaded at www.examinations.ie
- The State Examinations Commission Circular *Guidelines for the Administration and Marking of the school-based Oral Examination*.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

A total of 1,413 candidates sat the 2008 Spanish examination at Ordinary Level.

Table 2: Performance of Ordinary Level candidates from 2004 – 2008

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2003	926	4.6	30.0	32.9	67.6	23.1	7.5	1.6	0.2	9.3
2004	875	3.8	30.2	35.7	69.6	21.1	7.9	1.3	0.1	9.3
2005	1004	6.7	32.6	33.4	72.6	18.4	6.5	2.2	0.3	9.0
2006	1242	6.1	30.1	31.9	68.1	22.1	8.2	1.4	0.2	9.8
2007	1385	6.7	33.9	31.9	72.5	18.3	6.9	2.2	0.1	9.2
2008	1413	6.2	29.7	32.0	67.9	20.9	8.4	2.1	0.6	11.1

Table 2: Grades in Junior Certificate Spanish (Ordinary Level) 2004-2008.
(Grade data represent percentages.)

The results for 2008 are broadly in line with those of previous years.

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Part 1 – Listening Comprehension

The questions require less detail of candidates at this level than at Higher Level. There are four sections in this part of the examination:

- A - *Diálogos*
- B - *Unos anuncios*
- C - *Una noticia*
- D - *Descriptivo*

Section A – Diálogos

1. There were four dialogues in this section:

1. - *Pidiendo direcciones*
2. - *En el camping*
3. - *En la panadería / pastelería*
4. - *En el Departamento de Atención al Cliente de Kodak*

1. Very well answered.

2. This question was generally well answered but (c) was answered incorrectly by most. A common error was 'car park'.

3. (a) Some candidates only managed to comprehend *chocolate* for which no marks were awarded.

(b) Very good aural comprehension of numbers was in evidence here.

4. This was well answered by most candidates.

Section B - Unos anuncios

There were four announcements in this section:

1. - *En la playa*
2. - *Simulacro de incendio*
3. - *En la radio*
4. - *En el colegio*

1. This was generally well answered, but some candidates did not know *sábado*.

2. *jueves* posed a challenge for some candidates, while others did not answer 'gym'.

3. This was very well answered by most candidates, though some incorrectly answered 'June' instead of 'July'.

4. Some candidates did not get 'two' for the time.

Section C - Una noticia

There was one news item in this section:

1. *Robo en una joyería*

This proved to be the most challenging part of the Listening Comprehension for some candidates. Quite a few candidates missed *once* and Examiners noted that many had difficulty with both *el servicio* and *un coche negro*.

Section D - Descriptivo

There were two descriptive passages in this section:

1. *Ceuta y Melilla, dos ciudades españolas*
2. *Las hogueras de San Juan*

1. This was generally well answered, but *octubre* posed a problem for many candidates.
2. Many candidates did not get *veintitrés de junio*. Otherwise this section was well answered, with many candidates displaying a good knowledge of Spanish geography.

Part 2: Reading Comprehension

Section A

This was generally well answered. The most common difficulties were *iglesia* and *tengo sueño*.

Section B

There were six questions in this section:

1. - *Antonia*
2. - *Vuelta al colegio*
3. - *Tortilla española*
4. - *Museo Picasso Málaga*
5. - *La Universidad Camilo José Cela*
6. - *Atlas*

1. Many candidates lost marks by not knowing (a) *diecisiete* and (c) *conejo*.
2. (a) There was some excellent answering in evidence here.

- (b) Many candidates did not write the full date, as was required.
- 3. Most candidates did very well here.
- 4. This was well answered on the whole, but some candidates did not understand *domingo* in (a).
- 5. (a) Some candidates answered 96 for *noventa y siete*.
(b) This was generally well answered.
(c) Many candidates did not appear to understand *barato* and left it blank.
- 6. This was well answered, particularly colours.

Section C

There were four questions in this section:

- 1. - *Fernando Alonso*
 - 2. - *Libros y flores en Barcelona*
 - 3. - *Jennifer Lopez en España*
 - 4. - *Terremoto en Madrid*
- 1. (a) Some candidates lost marks by answering *pollo* in Spanish.
(b) Few candidates understood *médica*.
 - 2. While (a) was very well answered, few candidates managed to comprehend *la calle principal*.
 - 3. This was generally well answered.
 - 4. (a) There were many incomplete answers in evidence here.
(b) Many candidates lost marks by answering *teatro* in Spanish.
(c) Only a small, number of candidates answered this part successfully.

Section D

There were two questions in this section: a dialogue and a descriptive passage:

- 1. - Pepe and Juan Make Plans to Go Shopping
 - 2. - *Las Islas Canarias*
- 1. (a) 'Present' was not mentioned by many candidates
(b) (i) The time posed a difficulty for some candidates.
(c) This proved challenging for many candidates.
(d) 'Library' was a common response for *librería*.

2. Parts (a) and (b) were very well answered by most candidates.
 - (c) 'Submarining' was a common mistake.
 - (d) Very few candidates understood *mariscos*. Rice was given for *rica* but 'meat' and 'potatoes' were given by many.

Part 3: Written Expression

For many candidates, this tended to be the most challenging part of the examination. Examiners noted that a number of candidates did not attempt the Written Expression.

Section A

- (a) *Mil* often spelled incorrectly.
- (b) Many candidates wrote *dos cien*.
- (c) A common error was *ocho menos diez*.
- (d) *Cuarenta* was sometimes confused with *cuatro*.
- (e) *Trece* was frequently misspelled.

Section B

- (a) This proved difficult for many candidates.
- (b) 'Subject' proved difficult for some candidates. *España* was also very common.
- (c) This was well answered generally. Some candidates wrote *me madre*.
- (d) Many candidates answered in the present tense.
- (e) This was well answered by most candidates.

Section C

Point One

This was very well answered.

Point Two

Good vocabulary was in evidence here, particularly with *alumnus*, *profesores* and expressing like/dislike of school.

Point Three

This was well answered by many candidates.

Point Four

Many candidates appeared to have some difficulty writing about the weather.

Point Five

Many candidates were unable to deal with the future tense or, were not able to use *voy a*
....

Point Six

Many candidates had difficulty dealing with the past.

2.4 Conclusions

- The overall performance of candidates was generally in line with previous years.
- There is evidence of some excellent preparation of candidates for this examination.
- In general, candidates performed best at the receptive skills tests, in the Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension parts of the examination.
- The Written Expression element of the examination poses the greatest challenge for candidates at this level.
- Some candidates did not attempt parts of the examination.
- Some candidates have difficulties with basic elements of Spanish, and, in particular, numbers, days of the week and months of the year.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers are advised to:

- Refer to the published marking scheme. This can be accessed at www.examinations.ie.
- Ensure that students have regular practice in all of the language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Provide opportunities for Listening Comprehension work in the classroom. This will assist in building confidence at this vital component.
- Reinforce basic vocabulary so that students can adequately comprehend everyday Spanish. Particular attention could be given to numbers, days of the week, months of the year, times, colours and food.
- Familiarise students with examination technique. Examiners noted that some candidates did not attempt multiple-choice questions.
- Encourage candidates to read the titles of questions in both the Listening Comprehension and the Reading Comprehensions as these often contain helpful information for candidates.

Students are advised to:

- Ensure that all answers on the Listening Comprehension are in English or Irish and not in Spanish.
- Read the questions in the Listening Comprehension before the CD is played so that you will be focused on the correct word when the CD begins.
- Attempt all questions.
- Read questions carefully and ensure that you are giving the answer that is required.
- Revise basic vocabulary on a regular basis.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

The analysis of candidate performance and the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are based on the detailed reports submitted by the Assistant Examiners, Advising Examiners and the Chief Advising Examiner at Higher Level. It is hoped that this report on the 2008 Junior Certificate Examination in Spanish will prove helpful to both students and teachers in their classroom practice as they prepare for examinations in the coming years.

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the following:

- The Junior Certificate Spanish syllabus which can be accessed in *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools 2000/2001* and on the Department of Education and Science website
- The 2008 Junior Certificate Examination Spanish Listening Comprehension CD
- The 2008 Junior Certificate Examination Spanish Higher Level Written Paper
- The Marking Scheme for the 2008 Junior Certificate Spanish Higher Level Written Paper which can be downloaded at www.examinations.ie
- The State Examinations Commission *Circular Guidelines for the Administration and Marking of the School-based Oral Examination*.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

A total of 3,072 candidates sat the 2008 Spanish Junior Certificate examination at Higher Level.

Table 3: Performance of Higher Level candidates from 2004 - 2008

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2003	1824	15.9	31.6	30.9	78.4	17.1	4.0	0.5	0.0	4.6
2004	2093	14.4	27.4	34.3	76.1	19.8	3.7	0.5	0.0	4.2
2005	2353	12.3	27.1	33.8	73.1	21.3	4.8	0.7	0.1	5.5
2006	2684	14.4	29.7	32.2	76.3	19.4	3.9	0.4	0.0	4.3
2007	2866	13.5	28.9	35.6	77.9	18.3	3.4	0.2	0.1	3.7
2008	3072	12.8	28.9	34.8	76.5	19.8	3.1	0.5	0.1	3.7

Table 3: Grades in Junior Certificate Spanish (Higher Level) 2004-2008.
(Grade data represent percentages)

The table shows that candidates presenting for this examination have performed well over recent years with more than 75% of candidates awarded a C grade or higher at this level. The results for 2008 are broadly in line with those of previous years. The combined ABC result in 2008 was 76.5% and the combined EFNG result was 3.7%.

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Part 1 - Listening Comprehension

The questions demand more detail of candidates at this level than is the case at Ordinary Level. There are four sections in this part of the examination:

- A - *Diálogos*
- B - *Unos anuncios*
- C - *Una noticia*
- D - *Descriptivo*

Section A - *Diálogos*

1. There were four dialogues in this section:

- 1. - *Pidiendo direcciones*
- 2. - *En el camping*
- 3. - *En la panadería / pastelería*
- 4. - *En el Departamento de Atención al Cliente de Kodak*

- 1. This was generally well answered, but some candidates did not understand *bolera*.
- 2. This proved challenging for many candidates.
- 3. Candidates responded well here, but *panecillos* and *envolver* caused some difficulties.
- 4. This was well answered, but many candidates did not recognise the two letters of the camera model (RD 50) from the CD.

Section B - *Unos anuncios*

There were four announcements in this section:

- 1. - *En la playa*
- 2. - *Simulacro de incendio*
- 3. - *En la radio*

4. - *En el colegio*

1. (a) Some candidates did not understand what the lifeguard decided to do. (b) and (c): These were generally well answered.
2. Many candidates did not know the word *dejar* in (b).
3. This was well answered by most candidates.
4. Many candidates scored full marks here. However, some candidates did not get full marks in (c) where both the date and the month were required.

Section C - *Una noticia*

There was one news item in this section:

1. *Robo en una joyería*

The ability of candidates to accurately analyse data was clearly reflected in the marks obtained in this section. Those with good aural skills did well but some candidates had difficulties with part (c). Although most candidates would be familiar with *cámaras*, many did not attempt this question.

Section D - *Descriptivo*

There were two descriptive passages in this section:

1. *Ceuta y Melilla, dos ciudades españolas*
2. *Las hogueras de San Juan*

1. Most candidates did well in this question.
2. This proved to be the most challenging part of the Listening Comprehension for many candidates. However, many excellent responses were in evidence.

Part 2: Reading Comprehension

Examiners reported that candidates generally performed better in the Reading Comprehension part of the examination than the Listening Comprehension.

Section A

Most candidates achieved high marks in this section although some missed *sombrilla*.

Section B

There were six questions in this section:

1. - Vocabulary / Phrases
2. - *El Real Jardín Botánico*
3. - *Pide Un Helado Magnum*
4. - *MacPérez triunfa en España*
5. - *Javier Bardem Gana El Globo De Oro*
6. - *Feria Del Agua 2008*

1. Most candidates performed very well here. A small number of candidates did not know *Encantado* and some erroneously identified *La Nochebuena* as New Year's Eve.
2. There was some excellent answering in evidence here but (b) *invernadero* proved challenging for some candidates.
3. Most candidates did very well here.
4. This was well answered by most candidates.
5. Candidates answered very well, but in (c) some did not know *no sabe conducir*.
6. Candidates were familiar with the topic and scored very highly in this comprehension.

Section C

There were three questions in this section:

1. - *El tabaquismo en España*
2. - *Voluntarios para la Eurocopa de Fútbol 2008*
3. - *Renfe mejora el servicio al cliente con el nuevo billete electrónico*

1. Most candidates did well and appeared to be familiar with the concept of non-smoking.
 - (a) Many candidates did not understand *humo*.
 - (b) Candidates needed to be precise here - some gave 'public places' as the answer instead of 'public buildings'.
 - (c) Excellent answers were in evidence here.
2. All candidates did well here.
3. Generally well answered, but Examiners noted that this question was more challenging for some candidates than questions 1 and 2

Section D

There were two questions in this section: a dialogue and a descriptive passage:

1. - *En una tienda de ropa*
2. - *Así nos ven los turistas*

1. Candidates scored very well here. The only area of difficulty was (d) where some candidates had difficulty with *fondo* and *caja*.
2. Well answered by most candidates, although some found (d) and (e) challenging.

Part 3: Written Expression

At Higher Level, just as at Ordinary Level, this tended to be the most challenging part of the examination for the majority of candidates. At Higher Level, this part of the examination was attempted by almost all candidates and, in general, it was well answered. Examiners noted errors in relation to numbers (Section A). However, Examiners commented favourably on improvements in answering the sentences (Section B) and, in particular, the letter (Section C). Both these sections showed clear evidence of having been very well prepared.

Section A

1. (a) - *22 años*

Many forgot the accent in *veintidós* or wrote *vientidós*

2. (b) - *1200 alumnas*

Common mistakes were *mil y doscientas* or *mil doscientos*

3. (c) - $\frac{1}{4}$ *de kilo*

The most common mistake *cuatro* instead of *cuarto*

4. (d) - *El año 1845*

Some of the mistakes were as follows: *mil y ochocientos...*

cincuenta y cinco...

... ochoceintos

5. (e) - *196 metros*

Some wrote: *cien...*

ciento y noventa seis

sies

Section B

This section was attempted by the vast majority of candidates. It required knowledge of vocabulary which candidates at this level are expected to have. However, some candidates treated this section as a translation exercise, without considering alternative ways of conveying the idea.

2. (a) Very well answered by almost all candidates.
- (b) Many candidates found it difficult to accurately express themselves other than in the present tense.
- (c) Well answered by most candidates.
- (d) The dentist and toothache caused difficulties for some. Examiners noted that some candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the required vocabulary.
- (e) 'Sports' proved to be problematic for some candidates. Many did not get *me gustan* or an alternative.

Section C

A large number of candidates scored very high marks in this section and Examiners noted that many candidates expanded on all of their points appropriately.

Point One

Very well answered but *camisa* instead of *camiseta* was common. Many candidates had *bonito*.

Point Two

Most candidates did very well here, but some misspelled subjects.

Point Three

Many candidates found it difficult to express themselves using verbs in past tenses. This was particularly noticeable with irregular verbs.

Point Four

Months were often written with capital letters and *junio* and *julio* tended to be confused. The spelling of *agosto* caused difficulties for some candidates.

Point Five

Most candidates scored full marks here.

Point Six

Many candidates did not get full marks at this.

3.4 Conclusions

- The overall performance of candidates was in line with previous years with the ABC and EFNG grades well within the mean for the past five years.
- Examiners noted the high standard achieved by the majority of candidates at this level. The majority of candidates were awarded a B or C grade.
- All candidates attempted some parts of each point in the letter. This is a welcome development
- Candidates had some difficulties with numbers, days of the week and months of the year.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers are advised to:

- Refer to the syllabus, past papers and the published marking scheme.
- Ensure students have regular practice in all of the language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Encourage students to attempt all questions and to complete answers. This is particularly the case with expanding points in the letter.
- Practise numbers with their students, particularly in the context of the Listening Comprehension.
- Practise verb endings with students. Examiners have noted that candidates often know the correct verb but do not use it accurately. This was most evident in Part 3 - Written Expression.

- Ensure that students are familiar with future, conditional and past tenses of verbs particularly for the sentences (Part 3, Section B) and for the letter (Part 3, Section C).
- Ensure that students are familiar with the more common irregular verbs.
- Encourage students to do some aural work at home using past papers and the appropriate CDs.

Students are advised to:

- Manage your time carefully in the examination.
- Read the questions carefully, paying particular attention to those where ‘full details’ are required.
- Attempt all questions.
- Listen to Spanish CDs at home in order to accustom your ear to different Spanish speakers and their different accents.
- Build up your vocabulary and revise newly-learned words regularly.
- Avoid using learned-off paragraphs of material that may not be relevant to the question. In the letter, for example, it is essential to address the specific points asked. It is not necessary to use complex grammatical structures and long complicated sentences when something simpler is adequate.
- Keep answers within the specified spaces on the answer-book. This will assist you in organising your answers.