

Welcome to the summer 2018 Bulletin of Advanced Spanish.

This - our fourth - edition has a topical feel, with a focus on **political upheavals** in the Spanish speaking world, the [end of the Castro era](#), and - closer to home - [the Pre-U speaking exam](#).

In contrast to these topical pieces, we look at the timeless tradition of the [quinceañera](#), with our own *quinceañera* contributor, and the plight of the [indigenous people in southern Chile](#).

With an eye to the future, the Director of the Instituto Cervantes in London considers [the prospects for Spanish in the UK](#), offering an authoritative overview of the language's standing in the British educational system. And our outgoing editorial assistant Alex Campbell-Harris recounts the rocky road of her [transition](#) from university *hispanista* to City executive.

Continuing our series on the new Pre-U Topics and Texts syllabus, our literary focus turns to Javier Cercas' [Soldados de Salamina](#).

For those new to the Bulletin, this is a free resource written for and by enthusiasts for the language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world. We would welcome your contributions to future editions, using the [contact us](#) link to offer articles, feedback or suggestions. And enjoy dipping into the archive by using the index facility available through the [Past editions](#) link below. Bulletin content may be reproduced and used with attribution for educational purposes.

We would also be glad for you to pass the Bulletin on to others who may appreciate it, and who are welcome to contact us to get on the distribution list for future editions. Alas, cases have been reported of Pre-U teachers receiving the Bulletin without passing it on to their colleagues. The Inquisition would have regarded that as a heresy: don't let them catch you at it!

We expect to be back in September.

Buen verano a todos.



The Pre-U speaking exam 2018: the dust settles...

Spring sees the annual examiners' migration through the Pre-U centres to conduct the roughly 17-minute speaking test that constitutes Paper 1 - one quarter of the overall Pre-U exam.

For those unfamiliar with the ritual, the first half of the test focuses on a short newspaper article. The second half leads off with the presentation of a cultural topic prepared by the candidate about which the examiner then asks questions.



One third of the marks are awarded for linguistic range and accuracy. Range tends to be a matter of how well the candidate uses structures like the subjunctive, the passive, passive avoidance with *se*, etc. Even a native speaker will not score full marks if s/he does not work in these 'complex structures'. It may sound a bit artificial, but an exam is a showcase for what each candidate has learned - if you've got it, flaunt it!

Just under half the marks are awarded for content: specifically, the quality of response to the article, and the depth of knowledge and

opinion on the prepared topic. Discussion on the latter is structured around bullet points provided by the candidate, but the examiner is likely to probe any area that s/he considers significant, whether or not it features in those points. Thus, a candidate presenting on 'Che Guevara' is likely to be asked about Che's relationship with Fidel Castro, whether or not that features in the bullet points. If the candidate has overlooked a core area of the topic, it may affect the content mark.



Country-based topics among the current crop of students seem mostly to focus on Cuba (especially Fidel Castro's leadership), Colombia (drugs, FARC and the peace deal), Venezuela (Chávez, Maduro and the economy) and Spain (Franco's rule, the Transition, the economy and ETA).

The visual arts are always fertile ground for investigation, with Kahlo, Goya, Dalí and Gaudí all attracting attention, but Picasso in the lead. The regulation allowing 'visual material' to be brought into the exam adds spice to these presentations. Writers, sportsmen, drug kingpins, scientists, philosophers and indigenous Americans are also popular categories.



The presentation is intended to be, in the words of the examiners' introductory screed, *un intercambio auténtico*. Candidates can aim to make it as engaging as possible by finding a balance between recounting and interpreting the core elements of the topic. Examiners are by their nature hispanophiles, open to being infected with the candidate's enthusiasm for their topic. They are also likely to have heard presentations on most mainstream topics before: candidates need to be well clued up, this is no time for bluster.



Of course, we all make slips of the tongue in any language, and no one slip is going to cost candidates a mark. Indeed, when preparing candidates, it can add spice to my day to hear that those with a fondness for fast-food might gaze upon a hamburger '*con lujuria*'; that city residents fear '*contaminación gaseosa*'; that it can be '*peligroso ir al baño en el río*' (intended meaning: 'bathe');

that Mr Trump yearns to build '*una pared*' with Mexico; and that '*en los países donde hay desnutrición hay un problema con la gastronomía*'.

Despite which, the speaking exercise is overwhelmingly one of admirable erudition as a new generation of potential Hispanists makes its first independent exploration of the field. How fortunate they - indeed, all of us - are with the range of topics available.

The Examiner's Report published in September gives the definitive overview of that year's paper and candidates' performance. In the meantime, their successors - next year's candidates - can use the summer to read texts and even visit locations that will set them up for their eventual presentations. At the risk of sounding like the teacher that I am, those who start early really do have more time to feel at ease with their topic than those who wait until late. And when you're at ease with your topic, even an exam room is not such a bad place to be.

Belén Sánchez Alonso and other BAS contributors. Starting in our next edition: Belén's two-part guide to preparing candidates for the speaking tests.



Stirrings in the 'mundo hispano'

After a winter dominated by the Catalan crisis (covered in detail in our November edition), politics has gathered momentum across the Spanish-speaking world. Recent highlights include:

Spain: On 1 June Mariano Rajoy was ousted as *presidente del gobierno* after losing a vote of no confidence. The vote followed a corruption trial that compromised both Rajoy and his Partido Popular (PP). Rajoy declared that he was proud to leave Spain in a better state than when he took office in 2011. History may judge his administration to have stabilised the economy but inflamed the Catalan crisis through its remorseless application of the law against the independence movement.



Rajoy's downfall was swift and unexpected. Just a week before the no-confidence vote, commentators were focusing on the PSOE's stagnation in the polls and whether it had been right to reappoint Pedro Sánchez as leader after he briefly relinquished the role. Podemos was fretting over whether its leader Pablo Iglesias and spokesperson Irene

Montero should remain in their posts after buying a luxury house, seen by some as contravening the party's principles (party members were consulted and voted two to one in their favour). Ciudadanos was meanwhile basking in its improved poll ratings and wondering at what point its parliamentary support for the PP government would become counter-productive to its electoral interests.

Sánchez now heads a minority government, but before the forthcoming elections (probably later this year) he has the opportunity to gain favour with the electorate and shore up the PSOE's position. His first moves will please progressives: many key posts have gone to women, and there is a renewed emphasis on gender equality and tackling domestic violence. He has immediately announced more ambitious targets for renewable energy, on which the PP's record was woeful. His minister for the *comunidades autónomas* is seen as a conciliator. A former astronaut is now minister for science.



Away from Madrid, ETA's long-foreseen disbandment was completed in May – the product of disillusionment with violence among supporters of Basque independence, as well as successful police operations on both sides of the Spanish-French border.

The Catalan crisis went through a grim power struggle over whether jailed and exiled former *consellers* could be appointed to the new regional government. Secessionists protest the ex-*consellers*' continued detention, but hail as a victory the unwillingness of courts in Germany and Belgium to accept the Spanish prosecutor's attempts to charge other former Catalan government leaders with rebellion. There has also been controversy over allegedly racist anti-Spanish writings by the new president of the Catalan Generalitat, Quim Torra. The change in government in Madrid has the potential to defuse tensions: *ya veremos*.

Meanwhile in the Americas:



Colombia: the government and the ELN resumed their year-old peace talks in Havana in a bid to end five decades of armed conflict. The process has not been smooth: the ELN is said to exhibit an ideological superiority complex but an organisational inferiority complex compared to the larger FARC, which signed a peace deal in 2017 but which fared badly in recent local elections. The presidential election in June 2018 is likely to be won by right of centre candidate Iván Duque, causing some to fear an

erosion of President Santos' peace-building legacy.

Venezuela: the May presidential election was widely decried as a sham after the main opposition candidates were debarred on technicalities. Turnout was lower than 50%. Maradona flew in from Argentina to support President Maduro, while former Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero was ridiculed in Spain for a mediation effort that seemingly gave its blessing to the regime's electoral malpractice. Those around Maduro have acknowledged that the opposition 'capitalists' will never be allowed to regain power. About 40 military officers were arrested in the week before the elections.



[caption id="attachment_664" align="alignleft" width="259"]

Cuba: in April Miguel Díaz-Canel replaced Raúl Castro as president. A modest constitutional reform process (overseen by Raúl Castro) will now introduce same-sex marriage and presidential term limits, but in other matters Díaz-Canel has promised continuity with the Castro era. Cubans are largely indifferent. The regime continues to honour revolutionary heroes like Che Guevara and

Cienfuegos more overtly than its heads of government past or present.

Argentina: the ailing economy is proving harder to turn around than President Macri foresaw, jeopardising the prospects for his moderate administration to win a new term next year. UK-Argentina relations have improved under his presidency, with recent ministerial visits emphasising the increased cooperation.



Ecuador: with the revelation that the country has spent US\$5 million on Wikileaks founder Julian Assange's presence in its London embassy, renewed diplomatic attempts are underway to end his stay there. (The cost to the UK taxpayer is said to be at least twice as much.) Ecuador has granted Assange citizenship, but shut down his internet connection after he posted criticism of Spain's arrest of Catalan independence

leaders. The Guardian recently published claims that Assange had in 2014 hacked into the embassy's communications system...

Compiled by BAS editor Robin Wallis



The Last Days of the Castros

On my way to Hemingway's Finca in the outskirts of Havana, I asked the driver of my *taxi americano* how things were going in Cuba. He took one hand off the steering wheel of his jalopy and stroked an imaginary beard, the way I have seen many devout Muslims do when they mention the Prophet. "It is like having your mother-in-law living with you," he said. "You cannot change anything in your home until she kicks the bucket." That was in October 2017 when I took my first school trip to Cuba.

On my second trip last April, I went to Finca La Vigía again. Remembering my previous chat, I asked our driver how he saw the future of his country now that Raúl had announced he would step down later that month, an event conspicuously unremarked upon by the Cubans I met, a bit of a non-issue. "Nothing will change," came the reply. "But what about the long-term future?" I asked. "I mean, ten, fifteen, fifty years from now?" "Nothing will ever change," he replied. "They have the power and they will hold on to it." "If it is that bad, why don't you leave? You could go to the United States, or Canada, or wherever, couldn't you?" "I have a wife and an ailing dad," he said, "I am not going to abandon them." There was a short pause before he added: "I love my country, but I hate the regime."





A few hours later, I was supposed to meet my school group in the Parque Central for a cheesy farewell tour in open-top 1950s American cars. When I got there, two of the more enterprising girls, a duo who seemed to make new friends wherever we went – usually young men, “dead motive” or not, although they also talked to prostitutes – had found a guy who could organise the whole thing. This Latin *lowwer*, who insisted on speaking Scarface Spanish to me, took four girls in his pink Cadillac and sped off, music blaring out of his car stereo. The girls

were sitting on the back of the white leather seats, waving their arms in the air, whooping and screaming – behaviour for which they were later stopped by the police outside the North Korean embassy in the Vedado.

I followed behind in a red Buick driven by a middle-aged Cuban with a straw cowboy hat. Instead of a party, we had a chat. Driving along the Malecón, he pointed at the brand-new American embassy, fresh star-spangled flags flapping in the breeze. It had been opened by Obama in 2016, a milestone in the *Deshielo*. That diplomatic process was now back in the deep freezer, the driver suggested. When I asked how come, he simply replied: “Trum”. “That man is such a clown,” I said, and he grinned. “Un payaso, sí.”



Since I make my living by asking teenagers hypothetical questions we all know they will never have to use in real life but which the exam board is keen for them to master, I decided I would test whether if-clauses are actually understood by real-life Spanish speakers. So when the driver said that he hoped the economy would soon pick up, I used my decades of training and asked him: “If you had the choice between being like

China and have a one-party system that is nominally Communist but with a booming capitalist economy, or free elections, which would you prefer?” He talked for a while without using any of the constructions the exam board likes so much (I knew it!). In truth, his answer was not clear-cut. Or perhaps it was. He wanted both: the freedom to elect his representatives *and* a healthy economy.



For some, the recent relaxations seem to have worked out well. A perfect example of this new New Man – a far cry from the Che Guevarean New Man driven by moral rather than material incentives – was our coach driver Rogelio. He looked like he spends a great deal of his time in the gym – the girls said he was “hench” – and wore an expensive suit, shiny shoes and golden rings, bracelets and chains. He drove us from Havana to Viñales, then on to Trinidad and back again to Havana, a round trip of just under 1000 km; he charged us \$2,000 for the privilege. A heart surgeon would have to work for four whole years to make the same amount. Still, he said that the government took from his earnings whatever it fancied. Then I realised that his relaxed,

happy and yet resigned demeanour had little to do with recent political and economic changes or the prospect of more to come, and everything with being Cuban. What a wonderful people.

Sander Berg (Head of Spanish, Westminster School)

Matt Carver, a Westminster pupil participant on the trip, writes:

Nostalgia cubana



It is just over a month since I returned from Cuba, and the memory becomes more nostalgic with each draw on a cigar bought directly from a tobacco plantation. I miss walking the streets of Havana, as the salsa strains fill my ears with their relentless rhythm of ‘uno dos tres’ *pausa* ‘cinco seis siete’. I miss the trotting beat of the horse who carried me across an untarnished countryside. I miss the sight of 1950s American cars pumping baselines that would turn even Dizzy Rascal’s head. As I sit writing now,

listening to the Buena Vista Social Club, Che’s face flickers in the partial reflection of the window – I had been unable to resist the temptation to buy a *demangada* T-shirt with the ultimate image. And yet, what I have managed to bring back with me cannot come close to communism’s greatest success story.

So why is there so much animosity amongst Cubans towards the Castro regime? Does US propaganda, proclaiming the right to vote – which Emma Goldsmith described as the true opiate of the masses – and promise of ‘individual freedom’, continue to influence a population who, to many external observers, are living in the final stranglehold of an outdated ideology? Perhaps it is the dual economy, with separate currencies for tourists and locals. I saw this clearly expressed by the driver of a bright pink American Cadillac taxi who, when stopped by the police for blaring out tacky 2014 pop music, told us: “Nos odian porque ganamos más que ellos.”

So, what is to become of Cuba ‘post-Castro’? When I asked a Cuban schoolgirl on the street whether she was a communist and if she read the party newspaper *Granma*, she replied sarcastically: “Sí,

The forgotten people of Patagonia

Travelling in Patagonia – the enormous but mostly empty southern part of the American continent (one million square kilometres, but only 2 million inhabitants) – one often hears and reads about how these remote spots were ‘discovered’ as late as the nineteenth century. However, the indigenous people had lived and thrived there for 12,000 years. The story of European invasion, settlement, exploitation and subjugation of the native population is a fascinating, but sad, tale.



The first Europeans to reach this part of South America were the members of Ferdinand Magellan’s Spanish expedition of 1520. Magellan’s deputy reportedly saw giant men on the shore – “Patagones” – natives far taller (up to 1.90 metres) than the European average height of 1.55. This is one possible explanation for the name Patagonia – the ‘land of giants’.

Deeming Patagonia remote and inhospitable, the Spanish did not return until the eighteenth century, when a scattering of coastal settlements was established. By the middle of the nineteenth century the new nations of Chile and Argentina were competing for territory in the unexplored south. In the 1870s the Argentine government undertook the controversial Conquest of the Desert to defeat the indigenous peoples and establish settlements, particularly livestock ranches and mines. One notable group of settlers from the period 1850 – 1880 was that of the Welsh sheep farmers looking to start a new life and maintain their language and culture 8,000 miles from their homeland.

The interior of Patagonia was one of the last areas in the world to be seen by Europeans. The beautiful and vast Andean lake now known by its indigenous name of Nahuel Huapi was first “discovered” by Argentine scientist and explorer Perito (‘the expert’) Francisco Moreno in 1877. The largest lake in Tierra del Fuego was ‘discovered’ in 1886 and named after the Salesian missionary Monsignor Fagnano.

The indigenous people were subjugated by the European settlers and their land appropriated. Diseases brought from Europe – notable tuberculosis and syphilis – ravaged the native population.

In 1910 the Salesian priest Antonio Coiazzi wrote “Los indios del archipiélago fuegino”, a study of the indigenous people he encountered as a missionary in Tierra del Fuego. He notes how the establishment of ranches precluded the right to hunt that the indigenous people had always enjoyed. Their liberty of movement was reduced and they were obliged to adopt new customs to survive. Dependency on foreign notions such as fixed homes, clothes and alcohol drastically changed their way of life. Coiazzi correctly predicted the imminent demise of this community.



A study of the culture and traditions of the native people reveals an elaborate, nomadic life-style based on hunting. We now know that the Ona people, related to the Tehuelche studied by Coiazzi, were the tall race first seen by Magellan in the sixteenth century. Their polygamous society was governed by a complex supernatural belief system.

Little recognition was given to the rights or traditions of los indios by the early European settlers, and indeed it is only belatedly that their traditions, customs, languages and ancestral rights are being recognised by governments. In 1993 the Chilean ley indígena acknowledged the native people as an inherent part of the nation and established the National Corporation for Indigenous Development.

In June 2017 the Chilean president Michele Bachelet told a news conference that Chile had failed as a country in dealing with its indigenous citizens and asked for forgiveness for the errors and horrors committed or tolerated by the state in its relations with them.



The descendants of the native peoples continue to suffer discrimination today. Of the indigenous population, currently 38% of adults are illiterate and almost 70% have not completed primary school. The Chilean government's economic policies continue to exert a negative effect on the country's indigenous minorities and the government has refused to accept historical and ancestral land claims.

In Chile 10% of the population of 18 million identify themselves as indigenous, according to the 2012 census. The struggle to gain rights to lands that ancestrally belong to them is gaining publicity and public support. For example, during the recent papal visit to Santiago in January 2018 protesters burnt buses and scattered leaflets in the Patagonian district of Araucania to bring the world's attention to their grievances.

There are signs of progress in recognising the heritage of the indigenous people in Patagonia, but there is still far to go before the forgotten people regain their central role in the story of this region.

By Colin PHILPOTT, former assistant Head and director of Language College at Maidstone Grammar School

El español en el futuro del Reino Unido

Por Ignacio Peyró – Director del Instituto Cervantes en Londres

El español en Reino Unido no es una moda: está para quedarse. La necesidad de mejorar el aprendizaje de lenguas modernas por parte de los estudiantes británicos ha determinado una serie de medidas gubernamentales para el impulso de los idiomas extranjeros, incluido –notablemente- el español. Asimismo, los informes más recientes –Languages for the future, del British Council, o el Born Global de la British Academy- avalan en concreto el carácter “crucial” del español entre las distintas lenguas a la hora de hablar de un futuro post-Brexit.

No es para menos: en apenas diez años, el español ha pasado de ser la tercera lengua extranjera demandada en los centros educativos a consolidarse como la segunda, en un progreso exponencial que la acerca cada vez más al francés. Los datos son elocuentes. Los informes específicos a propósito de las lenguas en Inglaterra sitúan al español como segunda lengua en el sistema educativo inglés (muy por encima ya del alemán, y aproximándose mucho al francés). En primaria se ha pasado del 16% de escuelas en 2012 al 27 % que enseñaron español en el curso 2016-2017. Y en secundaria del 53% en 2007 al 70% actual en el sistema público y en un 89% de los centros privados. Finalmente, en la Universidad, al margen de los estudios específicos de lenguas, en el resto de grados la lengua más demandada por los estudiantes es el español, con grupos de más de 150 estudiantes en sesenta universidades de UK, y con un total de casi 14.000 estudiantes (el informe UCML-AULC, *Language provision in the Universities in the UK, 2016-2017*). A esta cifra habría que sumarle la de los estudiantes que cursan estudios de grado de español en setenta universidades de UK.



Por supuesto, y como bien sabemos en la red del Instituto Cervantes de Reino Unido (Londres, Mánchester, Leeds), la demanda del español se ha hecho patente en el conjunto de la sociedad, más allá del sistema educativo. Son múltiples los factores que han coadyuvado: el turismo; una actividad comercial-empresarial que concede un valor adicional a las lenguas globales; la percepción de sencillez frente a otras lenguas modernas o el impacto positivo de las acciones de promoción del español y su crecimiento en territorios de referencia como EE.UU, etc. Los propios centros del Instituto Cervantes han conocido durante más de un lustro alzas continuas en sus matriculaciones, al tiempo que un mayor interés en

nuestra programación cultural de difusión de la creatividad española e hispanoamericana.

Descrita la esperanzadora situación actual, quería compartir con los lectores de este Bulletin, para el cual me honra escribir, algunas consideraciones de fondo, más allá de los datos, sobre la situación del español y sobre su futuro:

La seducción del español. Los hispanohablantes rara vez somos conscientes del poder y la seducción de nuestra lengua. Hay grandes culturas nacionales con dificultades para su difusión por la barrera idiomática. El mundo, sin embargo, piensa y se expresa en inglés y en español. La demografía y la economía están de nuestro lado. Además, el español y su aprendizaje se

La población mundial que habla o estudia castellano
548 millones

Situación 2014
 El 6.7% de la población mundial es hispanohablante (470 millones de personas) porcentaje superior al ruso (2,2), al francés (1,1) y al alemán (1,1)

Estudiantes de español (Ranking de los 10 primeros países) En millones

País	Estudiantes de español (millones)
EE.UU.	7,82
Brasil	6,12
Francia	2,33
Italia	0,55
R. Unido	0,51
Alemania	0,50
Suecia	0,39
C. de Marfil	0,23
España	0,13
Senegal	0,10

Total en el mundo
19,7 millones

El castellano en la red
 El español se sitúa como segundo idioma que más «tweets» publica

2º

Proyección 2050
 Estados Unidos será el primer país hispanohablante de todo el mundo

Idioma	Porcentaje	Ranking
Chino	24,2%	2
Inglés	26,8%	1
Español	7,8%	3
Otras	41,3%	-

El castellano es la tercera lengua con más presencia en Internet

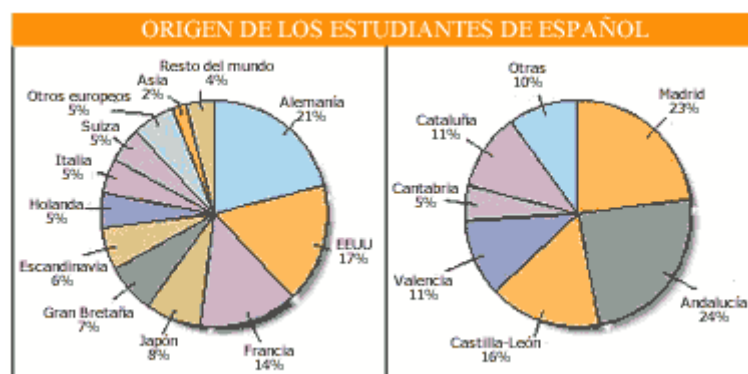
Más presentes en los campus. La Universidad es y debe ser un terreno prioritario: quienes estudian hoy, mañana marcarán el tono intelectual del país. Hay iniciativas tan loables como útiles –pienso en ELEUK–, que nos están ayudando a consolidar una presencia de calidad en el ámbito universitario. Asimismo, la Universidad aporta estudiantes comprometidos con el estudio de la lengua. Muchos de ellos tienen ya acceso a la acreditación oficial de sus conocimientos con los DELE. Y hay universidades –Aston o Exeter– que ya funcionan o están a punto de funcionar como centros acreditados por el Instituto Cervantes.

Prestigio académico. No nos engañemos. Los idiomas se legitiman por su prestigio académico. No podemos quejarnos, precisamente, de la atención de los hispanistas. Ni, comparativamente, de nuestra buena salud en los departamentos de lenguas modernas. Al mismo tiempo, sin embargo, es necesario afianzar el prestigio académico que otras lenguas –francés, alemán- supieron granjearse en el pasado. Lo más importante: el impulso de la edición, estudio y traducción de autores españoles y americanos al inglés. Hay aquí un amplísimo margen de mejora en un país con inercias intelectuales de desconfianza hacia la traducción. Y es una gran ocasión para mostrar la riqueza de una creación literaria que, en España y en América, puede romper clichés lesivos para nuestros países. Al mismo tiempo, este ámbito es idóneo para la expansión del estudio de catalán, gallego y euskera, así como de las literaturas escritas en nuestras lenguas cooficiales.



Escenario Brexit. La educación y la cultura no van a ser el punto número uno en las negociaciones del Brexit. Eso puede terminar perjudicando un intercambio académico España-Reino Unido que vive un momento extraordinario. Sin embargo, la educación y la cultura pueden ser el mejor hilo para suturar lo que alejó la política. Por decirlo brevemente: puede haber gestos de acercamiento entre ambas partes vía educación y cultura. Sería de especial utilidad la aceptación, por parte de las autoridades académicas británicas, de las certificaciones oficiales de conocimiento de idiomas avaladas por los Ministerios que sustentan a entidades como el Instituto Cervantes, el Goethe Institut, etc., etc. Para la lengua española constituiría un gran avance –ganar peso curricular incrementaría el número de estudiantes.

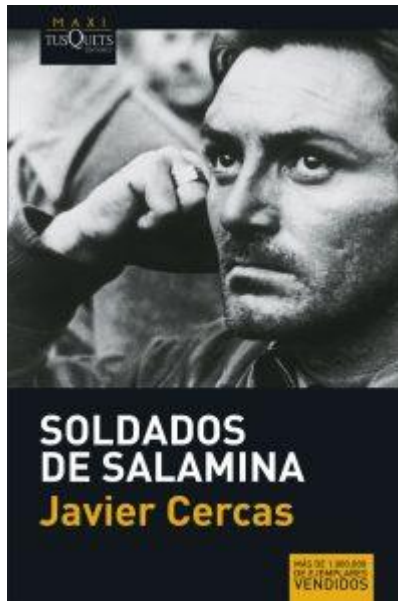
Turismo idiomático. España recibe cerca de 300.000 turistas idiomáticos al año. El perfil de este viajero es sumamente interesante: es joven, es culto y no es una mera visita de fin de semana. Quien permanece un tiempo aprendiendo nuestro idioma en España es luego un entusiasta activo en la difusión de nuestra cultura por el mundo: él viene una vez a España; España queda para siempre en él. Y los cerca de 500 millones de euros que el país recibe por los turistas idiomáticos son muy importantes a la hora de dinamizar destinos de interior. El sector privado es cada vez más consciente de las ventajas de este tipo de turismo, y desde el sector público –ante todo, los implicados en la enseñanza del español- debemos apoyarlo. El Instituto Cervantes contribuye a este turismo. Con nuestra programación cultural. Con nuestra oferta académica. Con nuestra presencia en ferias en todo el mundo. O con los 3.500 matriculados del Cervantes de Londres. Pero no sólo trabajamos en el extranjero. En la propia España contamos con 153 centros acreditados con el sello de calidad Instituto Cervantes.



Tenemos encomendado el necesario respaldo al trabajo de las jóvenes generaciones de hispanistas. La España moderna ha encontrado no poca legitimación histórica en los estudios de los hispanistas británicos: no sólo nos han servido para conocernos mejor; también han sido útiles para borrar complejos e ir minando esa noción de excepcionalidad hispánica cifrada en el “Spain is different”. No: España puede ser un país extraordinario, pero no es “different”. Es una más de las naciones-Estado de Europa, y con esa normalidad debe entenderse a sí misma, en lo positivo y en lo menos positivo de su Historia. La hispanística británica, sea en Oxford, en Leeds, en Londres o en Essex, en tantas universidades del Reino Unido, ha hecho un trabajo especialmente brillante en estas últimas décadas. Y ahora debemos apoyar y prestigiar las investigaciones de los nuevos hispanistas, para que los jóvenes Robert Goodwin de hoy, por ejemplo, sean los Hugh Thomas del mañana. Y, junto a los hispanistas, debemos difundir y dar visibilidad también, de modo notable, a la labor de los investigadores y científicos hispanohablantes.

Soldados de Salamina

Soldados de Salamina's finest quality is its enigmatic storyline.



The novel begins with an investigation of the historical events surrounding the failed execution by firing squad of Rafael Sánchez Mazas in Catalan territory. The investigation is conducted by a fictional version of the author, Javier Cercas, who is both the novel's main character and its narrator.

Cercas interviews Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, son of the co-founder of La Falange. Their discussion reveals the remarkable story of how Ferlosio's father escaped the Republican firing-squad and how his life was then spared by the soldier who found his hiding place. The journalist's investigation takes some unexpected turns before reaching an even more unexpected conclusion.

The distinctive structure of the novel, divided into three different sections, reflects the evolution of the plot and Cercas' investigation as he seeks the truth behind the historical events. The opening section, *Los amigos del bosque*, focuses on Cercas' decision to branch out from journalism and resume his faltering career as an author.

The documentary style implies that the episode with the unknown Republican soldier is an accepted fact, lending credibility to the subsequent historical investigation. The time elapsed between Mazas' failed fusilamiento, at the end of January 1939, and the time of writing, sometime around 2001, contributes to the sense of objectivity and emotional detachment from the Civil War. Cercas' search for the truth, with no apparent political bias, frames the novel in the historiographic metafiction genre.



An intriguing second chapter, *Soldados de Salamina*, focuses on Sánchez Mazas' life-story. He is presented as a mediocre writer but one of the key minds behind La Falange and also the right-hand man of Fascist Leader Primo de Rivera. Cercas' fictional narrator persists in his effort at telling a *relato real*, but at the same time he introduces the chapter with a warning that the events referred to are "no lo que realmente sucedió, sino lo que parece verosímil que sucediera". His attempt at bringing to life Sánchez Mazas' experiences in a journalistic manner has the effect of humanising the reader's view of the Civil War as it explores the personal dimension of the character. However, there is still one piece missing in this puzzle: a fascist like Sánchez Mazas cannot be the hero in a credible story.

The concluding chapter, *Cita en Stockton*, is devoted to the search for the hero. After following some leads supplied by the Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, Cercas tracks down Antoni Miralles, a Republican war veteran who could be the soldier that spared Sánchez Mazas' life. Cercas' meeting with the cryptic Miralles brings his investigation to an unforeseen end. Cercas seems to have found his hero, despite Miralles' reticence about Sánchez Mazas' shooting.

Miralles' account of the heroic Spanish soldiers that, like him, fought against the Falangistas in Spain and the Nazis in both Africa and Europe exposes some unresolved historical issues latent since the beginning of the *Transición*. The fictional Cercas' concluding monologue questions the historical value of his investigation.

Undeniably, history is written by the victors, and this would be no different in the Spanish Civil War. Franco's regime imposed a unilateral version of events, resulting in a traumatised society unable to come to terms with its past. However, the novel implies that, in spite of the amnesia that came with the *Transición*, further attempts to recover the *memoria histórica* must be made to bring closure to a conflict that scarred Spain for decades and to pay homage to those who perished fighting for the Republic.



In *Soldados de Salamina* our understanding of the War depends to a large extent on the interplay between real and fictional characters in a story-line that combines real and fictional events. From a literary perspective it becomes apparent that any real character is fictionalised when inserted in the novel, and even Cercas himself takes on the role of a

fictional journalist and narrator whose inconclusive historical account creates more doubts than it solves.

Cercas' quest turns into a discussion about heroism. The narrator's perception of events evolves with the plot. The initial episode of the anonymous soldier contrasts with the second one, with Sánchez Mazas as the Francoist anti-hero. Cercas' epiphany-like meeting with Miralles provides a moment of revelation and challenges the traditional understanding of heroism. The saviour of a notorious *camisa vieja* and instigator of the War was allegedly a young soldier who had to make a spontaneous decision. According to the narrator, Miralles made the right decision by not killing an enemy and sparing the life of a human being when he knew the War was already lost.

Soldados de Salamina captivates the readers' imagination at a fictional level, but its historical dimension makes it relevant to those interested in the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. After Franco's long dictatorship and an unfulfilled *Transición*, modern Spain is opening up to a shift in approach towards the *memoria histórica* and the need for justice and reconciliation.

By BAS editor Francisco Compán

Prospects for a languages graduate: a linguist takes on the job market

Our outgoing editorial assistant Alex Campbell-Harris sees how far a Languages degree can get her.

Aged sixteen, my choice of A-level subjects was obvious: I was good at and liked languages, so why not pursue those? Then a year later, when people began to ask what I was going to study at university, the answer once again seemed simple. I wasn't going to read maths, I had stopped enjoying French, so Spanish and Portuguese it was.

However, as I was about to enter my final year of university, with the pressure of finding a job looming, I began to consider if my choices had limited my career prospects.

I had recently returned from my year abroad in Argentina and Portugal, where university degrees are very vocational. To put this into perspective, while I was working on the project management team for the redevelopment of a hotel in Porto, most of the staff assumed that I was studying hospitality or tourism. They could not grasp the fact that I studied languages and didn't want to be a teacher or a translator.

This, at the time, seemed very narrow-minded to me. 'It's not like that in the UK', I would reply, trying to explain how you could go into a number of different professions such as banking, law and politics with a degree in languages. Though the truth of the matter was that I had no idea of the actual process when I was saying these things. It was just what I had been told by various careers departments over the years.



I had heard that finding a job was becoming increasingly difficult for undergraduates, but nothing prepared me for the reality of the process. I had made up my mind to try for some of the audit graduate schemes in London, and since most companies ask for a 2:1 in *any* subject I was relatively optimistic.

The early procedures are fairly standard. The first stage of each application involves questions to test capability and understanding that vary slightly from company to company and generally require the answers to be tailored specifically to the firm, showing that the candidate has done his/her research. The second phase is situational, numerical and verbal reasoning tests. Following these, a candidate might be asked to have a video/phone interview or invited straight to an assessment centre.

Unfortunately, I rarely made it past stage two or three. The first rejections were unsurprising: I had expected it to be more difficult to get past these online stages, with companies tending to lean towards those with a more relevant degree on paper. However, as time went on, I began to fear that I was barking up completely the wrong tree.

Quinceañera

Antes de empezar a contar mi experiencia de Quinceañera en Argentina tengo que explicar un poco el contexto, porque la verdad es que yo soy una argentina “trucha”*: mi padre y toda su familia son argentinos (de apellidos Sammartino y Arcando, descendientes de italianos), pero toda la familia del lado de mi madre son noruegos. Mi padre, hermano menor y yo somos los únicos Sammartinos que no vivimos en Argentina sino aquí en Inglaterra (West Berkshire) que es donde mi hermano y yo nos criamos.



La torta (tarta) de mi fiesta, un regalo de mi tía.

Pero que yo no viva en Argentina no quiere decir que mi familia “de allá” iba a dejarme sin una fiesta. Esto se puede usar como evidencia para dos puntos: primero, que la fiesta al cumplir quince años es una tradición tan importante y esencial en la vida de una adolescente argentina que yo no podía perderme la mía; y segundo, que cualquier excusa para tener una fiesta... ¡debe ser usada y aprovechada al máximo!



Celebrando en familia: mi hermano, mi padre, mi tía y yo.

De cualquier manera, a comienzos de este año yo tuve mi “Quinceañera” o “Fiesta de Quince” como decimos en Argentina, pero fue una Quinceañera muy moderna y bastante diferente. La razón principal es obvia, por supuesto: yo no vivo en el país, entonces prácticamente todos mis amigos (de mi edad) están en el otro lado del mundo. Para explicar, uno de los aspectos mas importantes de una Fiesta de Quince es juntar a la familia y los amigos de la mujer joven para celebrar juntos; no hay una separación entre los jóvenes y los adultos. Pero no soy la única que decidió apartarse un poco de la tradición, muchas chicas ahora eligen viajar al exterior, o una fiesta más chica y/o informal, en vez de planear un gran evento y preocuparse como si se estuvieran por casar.



Este contraste entre tradicional y moderno se ve más claro si les cuento sobre las Quinceañeras de mi abuela y de mi tía. Mi abuela, en la década del 50, obviamente tuvo una fiesta muy formal pero más bien chica porque ella vivía en un pueblo muy pequeño y tradicional. Ella usó un vestido largo, comprado especialmente para la ocasión. El único fotógrafo del pueblo fue contratado por sus padres. A la fiesta fueron no solamente su familia y sus amigos, sino también los amigos de sus padres. No fue una “noche de fiesta” en el sentido actual, sino más bien una cena donde ella fue presentada a todos como mujer, en un “rito de paso” luego del cual ya no la verían como una niña.

En cuanto a mi tía (hija de mi abuela), ella cumplió quince en la década del 90, que fue el pico de la locura y obsesión con las fiestas gigantes y planeadas, atendidas en vestidos inspirados por princesas. Su Fiesta de Quince fue en un importante salón en el centro de la ciudad de Córdoba, con velas, rosas, amigos, amigas, familia, vestido hecho por modista, maquilladora, peluquera, y más. Todo planeado, todo perfecto, todo tradicional. Pero ahora no deja que nadie vea las fotos de esa noche, porque la verdad es que ese tipo de fiesta no fue lo que ella hubiese querido.

Esta tía me dio el mejor consejo para mi Quinceañera: “elegí que sea una noche que te represente a vos** ahora, exactamente como vos sos ahora con quince años”. ¡Así que eso hice! Estuve rodeada de mi familia y los pocos amigos de mi edad que tengo allá, vestí una pollera larga y un “top” sin espalda, evité la maquilladora y la peluquera, pero sí elegí un salón íntimo sobre la costa de mi lugar favorito —el lago de Carlos Paz, cerca de la ciudad de Córdoba— y ¡muy buena música para bailar!



Posando frente al lago, entre el fuego y uno de los “livings” (lounges) exteriores.

Creo que mi Fiesta de Quince, en la década actual y acomodada a mi perfil multicultural, me representó a mí como persona y también representó el amor que mi familia siente por mí, manifestado en el tiempo, esfuerzo y dinero que dedicaron a organizarla. Ya no fue con el objetivo de “presentarme” como una mujer, porque no es que de un día al otro me convertí en una adulta... ¡todos sabemos que quince años no es edad adulta!



Un rincón para que mi familia y amigos puedan escribir y dejarme mensajes de recuerdo (si miran bien, ya hay tres papelitos enrollados encajados en la malla con marco).

Me parece que ahora las Quinceañeras representan más el comienzo del viaje hacia ser una mujer adulta que el “rito de pasaje inmediato” de antaño... ¡y son también una excelente oportunidad para bailar y divertirse sanamente toda la noche!

Anna Sammartino (de 15 años)

* Ser “trucho/a” es una expresión informal, muy argentina, que significa “adulterado/a” o “falso/a”.

** “vos” y “vos sos” son alternativas a decir “tú” y “tú eres”, en la conjugación del “voseo” argentino que es típica en conversaciones coloquiales / informales.