

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2003

FUNCTIONAL SPANISH

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GENERAL COMMENTS

This was the sixth year of examination for Functional Spanish. There has been a gradual increase of candidates sitting the examination, culminating in sixty-three candidates in 2003. This represents an increase of approximately 29 per cent of candidates over 2002.

There was a marked decline in the quality of the performance of candidates, especially in Paper 01. Thirty per cent of the candidates either responded inaccurately or did not respond to more than half the number of questions in Paper 01. About 25 per cent of the candidates failed to respond to questions in Paper 02. It was obvious that in at least two Centres, 90 per cent of the candidates were not equipped to sit this examination since their answers were to a large extent incorrect or they did not respond. The most successful candidates in those Centres were only able to earn 40 per cent of the total marks. The average for those Centres was 21 per cent and 16 per cent of the total marks. Those candidates, when required to do so in Paper 02, expressed themselves in incomprehensible Spanish. On the other hand they demonstrated a fairly high level of intelligence by the way they performed in the reading comprehension sections of the examination.

There were however, very good scores from a number of candidates who performed well in even the more challenging sections of both Papers 1 and 2.

DETAILED COMMENTS

UNIT I

Scripts were received from a total of 63 candidates. Seventy-three per cent of the candidates were able to answer several questions correctly. However, the remaining twenty-seven per cent of the candidates produced mostly incorrect responses or did not respond to the questions in Paper 01.

PAPER 01

Paper 01 consisted of 45 short responses to compulsory questions testing the Listening skill in contents that relate to personal identification, the home and family, daily routine, occupation and education. The texts heard, increased in length from Module I to Module III. The total marks allocated for each module is 20.

MODULE 1: Section I

Questions 1 to 10 consisted of simple utterances which candidates hear, and to which they are required to respond, stating who is speaking (1-5) and where the speaker is located (6-10). Questions 1, 4 and 10 were the least well understood:

1. *Sí, tenemos vuelos los sábados.*
4. *¿Desea usted enviar la carta por vía aérea certificada?*
10. *¿Le queda alguna entrada para la función del viernes?*

Questions 2, 5, 6 and 8 were the ones best understood by candidates.

2. *Y ahora pasamos a las noticias de hoy.*
5. *¿Cómo le quedan los zapatos, señora?*
6. *Los libros de historia se encuentra en el tercer piso.*
8. *¿Puedo probarme la negra? ¿Dónde queda el probador?*

Even so, only question 6 was understood by more than half of the candidates (42 out of 63).

MODULE 2: Section II

This section consists of ten questions related to two illustrations on the candidates' paper. There was a decline in the number of correct responses in this module. The total marks for this module was also 20. An average of 60 per cent of the candidates responded correctly to the following questions which were the best answered ones:

12. *¿Cuántas personas están en el agua?*
16. *¿Cuántas personas comen helado?*
17. *¿Dónde juegan los chicos con el perro?*

The least well understood questions were 15 and 20:

15. *¿Quiénes construyen el castillo en la arena?*
20. *¿Cuál de las mujeres está leyendo el periódico?*

These were two of the longer questions, which might be the reason for the problems with comprehension.

MODULE 2: Section III

The number of correct responses continued to decline in this section. The texts heard were longer and contained more information. There were five selections, which increased in difficulty. The questions best answered were the first ones in each selection. The fewest candidates produced correct responses to the questions for the fifth selection. Only one candidate responded to questions 34 and 35 correctly. Twenty candidates had partially correct answers for Question 35.

The phrases and vocabulary that were being tested in this section were:

- *el sol ha salido*
- *en su primer día*
- *oferta navideña*
- *cien bolívars*
- *pintura de labios*
- *gratis*
- *con cada compra*
- *el tenista*
- *derrotar*
- *Martes 8 de enero*
- *sale en 30 minutos*
- *dirigirse a la puerta número cuatro*
- *una demora de cuarenta minutos*
- *repuestos, alta calidad*
- *precios baratos.*

MODULE 3: Section IV

The first two selections of this module dealt with the world of work, while the third one was cultural in content.

The first selection consisted of a long sentence with well-structured phrases, and containing a number of cognates. The second selection of that section, with its longer more complex sentences, was a little more demanding. However, its content and vocabulary were relevant to the course content and objectives. The third selection consisted of four shorter sentences with single relative clauses in three of the sentences.

The number of correct responses decreased even more in this section, which by its very nature should be the most challenging. Question 40 was the only one that produced a high number of correct responses. The phrases that candidates were required to understand include the following:

- *La empresa busca un profesional universitario..... para el puesto de gerente general.*
- *El banco de Hispanovest eliminará 800 empleos*
- *Sus negocios sumamente afectados por la recesión económica*
- *La incertidumbre del comercio internacional*

It was important for candidates to understand the entire text before attempting to answer the first question, since the information needed to answer that question was articulated at the end of the text. Only a third of the candidates produced the correct response to Question 42. They seemed not to have understood the place name, Manila. Candidates were required to show comprehension of phrases such as:

- *En Manila, miles de personas realizaron una procesión*

- *Una figura religiosa que se considera milagrosa*
- *Los hombres van descalzos y tratan de tocar la escultura.*

The unsatisfactory performance in Paper 01 suggested that candidates were not exposed sufficiently to listening to the Spanish language and did not familiarize themselves with the appropriate vocabulary required for each module.

PAPER 02

MODULE 1: Section I

Reading Comprehension

This section comprised four selections testing the candidates' ability to understand short advertisements related to travel, physical fitness, food and education. Most candidates understood and responded well to the questions in this section.

Selection 2 (a) - A number of candidates either did not respond (approximately 25 per cent) or answered incorrectly (approximately 43 per cent) did not understand *con el pago de un día* as the reason given to benefit from the advertisement.

Selection 2 (d) - The word *único* was mistakenly interpreted as 'unique', while *estar en forma* also seemed to have posed a problem.

Selection 3 (a) - Several candidates responded to the question "What kind of establishment is being advertised?" with a 'wine cellar' or 'wine shop' instead of a restaurant.

Selection 4 (a) - Some 78 per cent of the candidates who attempted this question did not obtain full marks. There seemed to be a lack of comprehension of *corrige* and the subjunctive *hagamos*.

MODULE 1: Section II

In this section, candidates are required to compose simple structures in Spanish. There are two questions in this section. Almost all of the candidates attempted Question 5 with the main areas of difficulty being the expression of *le gusta, no le interesa* while others also did not adequately express 'runs a travel agency'. In some instances, vocabulary items such as *nieto, cariñoso* and *viajar* posed a problem for candidates.

Question 6

Most candidates were able to convey the meaning of their project but structural accuracy and limited vocabulary caused some candidates to obtain a low score.

MODULE 2: Section III

Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension text tests the candidates' ability to comprehend written information on a wide variety of social situations. The particular text dealt with cooking.

Question 7

Few candidates showed a good understanding of the text. Generally, candidates did not display familiarity with the terminology used in recipes and cooking and this resulted in a significant number of no responses and low scores.

Item (a) - some candidates did not understand the meaning of *imprescindible*.

Item (c)(i) - candidates did not seem to understand in some instances, all the vocabulary related to meats used in the recipe. While many were able to explain that 'chicken' was used in the '*hallaca caraqueña*', vocabulary items such as *tocino* in most instances seemed to have hindered the proper explanation of the answer.

Item (c)(ii) - posed a major problem for most candidates with some 35 per cent of the candidates not attempting it while another 40 per cent did not score. In most cases, candidates did not understand the difference between *relleno* and *masa* leading to some confusion in responses.

There was a significant number of no responses in Item 9(d). For the most part, of those candidates who did not respond, they did not grasp the meaning of *garbanzos*, *remojar*, *crudos* and *dejando que se maceren*.

Item (e) - Forty per cent of the candidates did not respond to this question and almost a third of those who did, scored no points. As the word *masa* was not understood by a number of candidates many of them answered incorrectly.

Item (f) – Fifty-three per cent of the candidates did not respond to this question. However, of the 47 per cent who attempted the question, most of the candidates were able to adequately explain at least two out of the five steps required.

MODULE 2: Section IV

Written Responses

This section tested the candidates' ability to respond in writing to practical everyday situations. Most of the responses were appropriate to the situations described.

Questions 8 (h) to 8 (j) registered a notable number of no responses.

MODULE 3: Section V

Question 9

Reading Comprehension

The text tests the candidate's ability to understand a passage that deals with culture.

Item (b) - although almost all the candidates attempted this question, some 50 per cent of the candidates did not score. Candidates seemed to have a difficulty in understanding *pagar o cumplir una promesa*.

Item (d) - Over fifty per cent of the candidates either did not respond to the question 'Why do some of the men hold children in their arms?' or did not score points for their response.

Item (e) - Fifty per cent of the candidates answered incorrectly. They did not seem to understand that the celebration was to the form of a drama, dramatization or theatre.

Section (i) - Twenty per cent of the candidates did not respond to this question. However, all of the remaining 75 per cent scored points for their response.

MODULE 3: Section VI

Letter/Report

In this section the candidates' ability to write a more formal presentation based on information given in a cultural context is tested.

Some candidates did not follow the guidelines for content. Candidates need to answer each aspect of content adequately. Common errors included: incorrect use of *ser* and *estar*, *gustar*, confusion in the use of *desde*, the preterite and the imperfect and the use of the past participle as opposed to the preterite.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Project – Extended Writing

Candidates are required to write an extended presentation on a theme related to any of the topics of the three modules. Most candidates gave evidence of having carried out research that was either practical or documentary, and the topics were relevant to the syllabus. However, it seems that closer supervision is necessary to ensure that the Spanish produced is more comprehensible. In some cases it was obvious that candidates relied on translations produced with the help of modern technology with its typical pitfalls. The errors that appeared should have been pointed out to the candidates. The observations made for the 2002 examination is also applicable to 2003. Students need to read more Spanish, and to acknowledge sources of information.