

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE® EXAMINATION**

JANUARY 2013

**SPANISH
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2013 January examination was written by 463 candidates compared with 531 in January 2012. Sixty-seven per cent of candidates achieved acceptable grades (Grades I–III) compared with 69 per cent in January 2012. Candidates' performance on Papers 01 was similar to what obtained in January 2012, performance on Paper 03 in 2013 was improved, while performance on Paper 02 declined.

Teachers are encouraged to continue their strategies to get their students to perform to the best of their ability. Such strategies include providing opportunities to help them strengthen their writing skills, continuing the practice of doing oral exercises (especially interacting with native speakers) and doing reading comprehension.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprised two sections, assessed the ability of candidates to listen to and understand a number of aural items in the target language and to read and understand a number of written items. Both sections required candidates to have sufficient mastery of essential grammar and vocabulary. Performance in 2013 was comparable to that of 2012.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section I (Question 1) – Directed Situations

In this section, candidates were presented with ten situations for which they were required to provide written responses in Spanish. The situations demanded that candidates recognize the function they were required to perform, using vocabulary and structures expected of candidates who have undergone five years of study. Candidates were assessed on the appropriateness of their responses and the quality of language used. Inappropriate responses were awarded no mark, even if the quality of language was perfect.

Demands of the Section

The questions suited the level of the examination so the majority of candidates made a fairly good attempt at answering them. The questions demanded vocabulary and structures of an everyday nature that should be well within the grasp of candidates.

Candidates' Performance

Candidates performed creditably on this section. The majority of candidates achieved passing grades on this section. Poor performance resulted mainly from candidates' failure to focus on the elements required by the question, usage of incorrect grammar and lack of vocabulary.

Candidates' Strengths

Some candidates answered concisely and fulfilled the requirements of the question. These candidates provided generally correct responses, despite a few errors.

Candidates' Weaknesses

General weakness was noted in areas of grammar especially in agreement of subject and verb, position and agreement of adjectives with nouns, spelling and vocabulary.

The following are examples of errors in grammar:

- *y interesante* frequently used instead of *e interesante*
- *Porque* rendered as *por que*
- *Asistir* used instead of *ayudar*
- *Mirar* used for *buscar*
- *Simpático* used to describe a poem
- *En sábado* rather than *el sábado*

Errors in vocabulary included the following:

- *Poema* rendered as *carta/nota/composición/cartita*
- *Sale* used for *venta*
- *Dineros* for *pesos*
- *Promiso* for *prometo*
- *Bajo* for *corto*
- *Las ropas* for *la ropa*
- *Examinación* for *examen*

Errors in spelling included:

- *Viente* for *veinte*
- *Trienta* for *treinta*
- *Dolares* for *dólares*
- *Professor* for *profesor*
- *Pedí* for *perdí*
- *Felizidades* for *felicidades*
- *Libre* for *libro*

Comments on Individual Situations

Possible answers for each situation and errors which occurred in each situation are given below.

Situation (a)

Write an email to your cousin in which you promise to do two things for him/her.
(Function: making a promise)

Suggested response: *Prometo comprarte un libro y llevarte al cine.*

This question was fairly well done. However, there were problems with grammatical structures as well as vocabulary. *Promiso/promesa* were used for *prometo* and the verb was often followed by the preposition *a*. There were also errors with *tu/te/ti* and their usage. *Tu* was often substituted for *te*. *Llavar* was often used for *lavar* and *ropa* was pluralized.

Situation (b)

Your teacher is taking up a new job overseas. Write him/her a farewell note and express your good wishes. (Function: expressing farewell and good wishes)

Suggested response: *Adiós señora, que le vaya bien.*

There were multiple errors in this question. Some of these were:

- Misspelling of *profesor* (spelt with ss)
- Misuse of the familiar/polite form — *tú* often used for *usted* to address the teacher
- Use of *trabajado/trabajador* instead of *trabajo*. Candidates did not know the word for ‘job’.

Candidates frequently failed to supply both demands of the question, often giving one reason instead of two. However, when they did, they stuck to stock phrases like *Vaya con Dios/Buena suerte/Que le vaya bien*.

Situation (c)

Your friend is having a party next Sunday and seeks your assistance with the preparations. Respond by email, indicating what you can do to assist and when. (Function: offering assistance.)

Suggested response: *Voy a llevar bebidas el domingo temprano.*

In this question, candidates often forgot to mention the time. When they did, they frequently wrote *en sábado* rather than *el sábado*. In addition, the preposition *a* was almost always forgotten after *ayudar*. The verb *asistir* was often used and misspelt as *assistir*.

Use of ‘*me*’ instead of ‘*yo*’ — *me traigo las bebidas*.

Situation (d)

You send a message to your friend congratulating him/her on a special accomplishment. Write the message mentioning the accomplishment. (Function: congratulating)

Suggested response: *Felicitaciones por haber ganado el maratón.*

Many candidates misspelt *felicitaciones/felicidades/congratulaciones*. They often used *muy bien* to express congratulations. The present participle was often used after *en* for example, *en ganando* to express on winning. When responses referred to passing an exam the word *examine/examinación* was often used instead of *examen*.

Situation (e)

You received a poem from a friend. Write him/her an email giving two reasons why you like the poem. (Function: giving reason)

Suggested response: *El poema es bien escrito y es romántico.*

Here it was evident that many candidates lacked knowledge of vocabulary, even with the word *poema*, and when they did use the correct word the gender was often incorrect. In addition, they frequently used inappropriate adjectives such as *simpático y cariñoso* to describe the poem.

Other errors were:

- *Y interesante* for *e interesante*
- Use of *lo* with *me gusta* and *yo me gusta* to say I like
- *Bajo* instead of *corto* to describe the poem
- Use of *carta/cartita/composición* for *poema*
- *Por que* instead of *porque*

Situation (f)

Your parents did not allow you to go to an event. Send an email to your friend telling him why you were not allowed and how you feel about it. (Function: giving information and expressing feelings)

Suggested response: *Recibí malas notas y estoy triste.*

This item was one of the more challenging for candidates. The past tense was hardly used and they often expressed how they felt physically, rather than how they felt about not being allowed to go to the event. The use of *ser* rather than *estar* with emotions was a recurring error, and candidates often used ‘soy’ to translate I am going to ... (*yo soy a ...*)

Situation (g)

You lost a book that you borrowed from your teacher. Write a note of apology and state what you will do about the situation. (Function: apologizing and expressing intention)

Suggested response: *Lo siento señor, voy a comprarle otro.*

Errors in this item included the use of *lo siento/siento que* and the article often used before *otro*. Candidates avoided using the future tense but instead used the present tense to say what they will do. Candidates also incorrectly used the familiar *tú/te/ti* instead of the formal *comprarle* or *para Vd*, when referring to the teacher.

Situation (h)

You are desperately in need of help for the school concert. Write a message to your best friend requesting assistance with one aspect of the concert. (Function: making a request)

Suggested response: *Anita, ayúdame con las bebidas por favor.*

Several candidates responded in the first person to this item. The word *concierto* was often misspelt and the word *ayudar* was used without the preposition. There was also inconsistency in the use of the formal and informal *usted/tú* and *su/tu*.

Situation (i)

You have an item for sale and wish to inform your school mates about it. Write the message you put on the school's notice board, including the price. (Function: giving information)

Suggested response: *Vendo computadora por trescientos dólares.*

Lack of appropriate vocabulary was evident in this item. Several expressions/words were used for *sale*: *sale/por vender/por vende*. Candidates made errors in expressing the cost/price. They often used *para* instead of *por*, misspelling of numbers, *viente/trienta* even the word for dollars proved problematic as several versions were supplied — *dollars/dolores/dineros*.

Situation (j)

Your father will not be picking you up after school. Write the note he leaves on your bedroom door explaining why. (Function: giving information and a reason)

Suggested response: *No puedo buscarte hoy Felipe porque no tengo carro.*

Candidates were able to use *recoger* and *buscar* in this situation, even though *recoger* was misspelt as *recojer*. Weaker candidates wrote *venir para* instead of *venir por* to express 'to come for'.

The expression 'to have to' was simply translated by *tener*. *Que* was often omitted. **Tengo asistir a una reunión*.

Other errors included *viajar* being used inappropriately, for example, *Tienes que* viajar a casa*.

In the case when the reason was that the car was not working, some candidates used the verb *trabajar* to express this instead of *funcionar*.

Recommendations

- Candidates need to follow the rubric which emphasizes that only one sentence is required for each answer. They need to provide the elements required in each response in a single sentence.
- Before attempting the question, candidates need to focus on the function required in their response before attempting to write their response.
- The need to produce the actual note, email or message must be stressed so that candidates will not attempt to translate the question or produce reported speech, or introduce the responses by restating the situation.
- Teachers should advise students to look for the distinct functions/notions required from them in the Directed Situations. Students should provide responses that address the full requirements of the question in order to access the full range of marks.
- Candidates should use the tense appropriate to the situation.

***An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form, spelling or structure.**

Further Comments and Recommendations

The situations were straightforward and did not leave much room for candidates to misinterpret or stray from the point. Generally, the majority of candidates interpreted the questions correctly. The grammatical structures and vocabulary required were well within the reach of the majority of the candidates. However, candidates must pay closer attention to spelling, especially with regard to the use of accents. The omission of accents on key words resulted in a loss of marks. Some notable omissions were on the following — *mama, papa, mas, tu, esta, espanol, manana, senor, senorita*

Attention also needs to be paid to accents being used with the verb tenses which differentiate between present and preterite tenses.

It is also important that candidates recognize that double ‘s’, ‘t’, ‘m’ among others, are not used in Spanish. There were too many instances where well-known words like *profesor, asistir, comercial* were rendered incorrectly.

Section II (Question 2/Question 3) - Letter/Composition

This section presents the candidates with two options: a letter and a composition, each marked out of 30. In addition to assessing candidates’ production of written prose based on the parameters outlined in the syllabus, the section also assesses candidates’ ability to write coherently and clearly, using adequate vocabulary, idiom and grammatical structure.

Letter — Demands of the Section

This question was in keeping with the demands of the syllabus. The majority of candidates who chose the letter attempted to answer fully. Candidates were tested on appropriate tenses outlined in the syllabus.

Candidates’ Performance

Performance ranged from excellent to limited. Few candidates were in the excellent category. The majority of scores fell within the categories of good and moderate. At least three of the elements of the question were attempted by most.

Candidates’ Strengths

The majority of candidates followed the given rubric for this question. Introductory and closing phrases were well learnt. Less competent candidates were able to express like and dislike as well as to describe simply using the verb *ser*. The more competent candidates used a wide range of vocabulary and idiom but some expressed themselves in simple, yet accurate language.

Examples of Good Performance

Some use of idioms:

¡Qué ameno!

En un abrir y cerrar de los ojos

Te echo de menos

Good structure and vocabulary:

Los fondos que recaudaron
El concierto fue/ tuvo lugar
Me encantó cuando

Appropriate use of tenses:

Van a usar el dinero
Fui al concierto
Perdona que no te haya escrito
Estoy escribiendo para decir

Appropriate use of the subjunctive:

Espero que estés bien

Candidates' Weaknesses with Examples of Errors

Some candidates seemed not to be competent in the adequate use of tenses. Others did not follow an appropriate sequence of tenses.

- *Mi familia y yo ir*
- *Mi familia y yo fuemos*
- *El dinero es voy a*
- *Habían muchas personas*
- *Cuando llegábamos al concierto (instead of llegamos)*

The date was written incorrectly:

- *El 16th de abril*. The word 'el' is not required if the date is written in isolation.
- *El seis de noviembre*. Numbers must be written in figures for dates.

Some literal translations were seen:

- *Te perdí*
- *Muy mucho*
- *Con no*

Incorrect rendition of 'querido'

- *Quierdo, quirda, Dear*

Errors with 'ser' and 'estar':

- *Yo era muy contento en el concierto*
- *Fue enojado*
- *La fiesta estuvo bien*

Errors in agreement:

- *Todos las personas*
- *Los gentes*
- *Este carta*

Incorrect translation of 'at' a place:

- *El concierto fue al parque*

Incorrect translation of ‘about’:

- *Quiero decirte a eso del concierto*

Incorrect use or lack of object pronoun:

- *Te escribo para informarle*
- *El dinero se usará*

Incorrect use of ‘gustar’:

- *Yo me gusta*
- *Las personas les gustan*

Limited vocabulary:

- *Cantador* — singer
- *El artiste* — artist
- *El concertó/La concierto* — concert

Incorrect use of preposition:

- *Mi papá decidió a*

Inability to use the correct expression for ‘proceeds’:

- *El dinero que recibimos sería va a para beneficio*

Composition — Demands of the Section

This question was in keeping with the demands of the syllabus and was within the scope of candidates’ ability. The majority of candidates who chose this question attempted to answer fully.

Candidates’ Performance

Few candidates were in the excellent category. The majority of scores fell within the bands of good and moderate. All four of the elements of the question were attempted by most candidates.

Candidates’ Strengths

The majority of candidates followed the given rubric for this question. Some attempts were made to use idioms in order to enhance the essay. Most candidates were able to express time and location.

Examples of Good Performance

Good use of expressions:

- *¡Qué guay!*
- *¡Qué alivio!*
- *¡Qué desastre!*
- *¡Qué gracioso!*

Other good expressions included:

- *El viaje fue extremadamente fascinante*
- *Conocer a gente nueva*
- *En primer lugar*
- *En segundo lugar*

Correct use of tenses:

- *Mi familia y yo decidimos ir*
- *En el futuro ahorraremos*

Candidates' Weaknesses with Examples of Errors

Tenses were rendered incorrectly.

- *Mis padres dijieron*
- *Mis padres volviste*
- *Las vacaciones empezaron*

Negative construction was rendered incorrectly.

- *Fue no limpio*

Omission or incorrect use of pronouns:

- *Yo llevé bien con él*
- *Yo me gusta*
- *Mi hermanas le gustan*
- *Mi y mi familia*
- *Comportaron mal*

Omission or wrong placement of prepositions:

- *Mi papá decidió a*
- *Ir en un vacación*
- *Salimos ir a Puerto Rico*

Clumsy expression:

- *Agosto vacaciones*

Incorrect translation of difficulty:

- *Difficulté*

Recommendations for Questions 2 and 3

- Candidates need to widen their vocabulary base through exposure to written and aural material.
- Candidates need to recognize that the vocabulary and structures learnt can be used in various contexts. For example the 'difficulty' needed in the composition could be an accident, fire, lost property, late flight, illness
- Meaningful and effective practice of questions is needed.
- Learning can be made more interesting through the use of songs, games or movement.

Section III (Question 4/Question 5) – Contextual Announcement/Contextual Dialogue

This section required candidates to choose to write either a contextual announcement or complete a contextual dialogue. Cues in English were provided for both options.

Demands of the Section

The contextual announcement and the contextual dialogue were in keeping with the information outlined in the syllabus and therefore within the scope of candidates' ability. However, most candidates opted to answer the contextual dialogue.

Candidates' Performance on the Contextual Announcement

Candidates' Strengths

Most candidates observed the rubric of the question and attempted to address all of the cues. There was a very good manifestation of sound grammatical competence and good vocabulary, albeit by a small number of candidates. Examples of good usage of language included:

- *Debe tener buenas notas*
- *Por lo menos dos años de experiencia*
- *Tendrá que doblar la ropa*
- *Puede enviar mensajes a*
- *Para información adicional*
- *Favor de contactar a*
- *Visite nuestro sitio web*
- *Para solicitar el trabajo escriba a*

Candidates' Weaknesses

Many candidates who attempted this question failed to show a solid command of grammar and knowledge of relevant vocabulary. Examples of errors included:

Errors in Grammar:

- Omission of the personal *a* (*llame Juan*)
- Inaccurate use of the imperative (*vienes, llamas*)
- Incorrect use of *gustar* (*Nosotros tu gustariamos, gustanlos*)
- Inaccurate use of *necesitar* (*es necesito tener, tu necesita una trabaja*)
- Incorrect definite/indefinite articles (*ua trabaja*)
- Lack of proficiency using the impersonal *se*
- Inaccurate use of possessives (*Carlos edificio*)
- *Y inteligente*
- The use of *por* and *para*

Errors in vocabulary:

- *Mirar* instead of *buscar* (*somos mirando para*)
- *Qualificaciones*
- *Poste* for *puesto*

There was also evidence of a lack of vocabulary to describe personal qualities or personality traits. Candidates also seemed to have some vocabulary but were challenged by the correct spelling. Evidence of this was seen in the following:

- *Interessante, interestante* for *interesante*
- *Matieras* for *materias*
- *Responsibilidad* for *responsabilidad*
- *Geographia* for *Geografía*
- *Mathematicas* for *matemáticas*

Other examples of weakness in language proficiency included:

- *Ella voy a recibir un salario*
- *Job vacancia*

Candidates' Performance on the Contextual Dialogue

Candidates' Strengths

Most candidates observed the rubric and attempted to address all the cues. Even when there were challenges to interpretation and comprehension, candidates were able to respond adequately to the demands of the question. Examples of good usage of language included:

- *Pero estarán aquí*
- *Sí, han llegado*
- *Me visitan de vez en cuando*
- *Es la primera vez que me visitan*
- *Normalmente me visitan cada año*
- *Los conocí en los Estados Unidos*
- *Fui a participar en el torneo de fútbol*
- *No hay alojamiento para todos*
- *Es importante que sea*

Candidates' Weaknesses

Although most candidates attempted this question, there was considerable difficulty with the responses that they provided to the questions *¿Dónde y cuándo los conciste?* and *¿Qué estuviste haciendo allá ese verano?* Most candidates wrote either an inappropriate response or simply repeated the question. Candidates did not seem to understand either the verb *conocer* or recognize the preterite form of the verb. Similarly, they did not recognize *estuviste* as the preterite form of the verb *estar*. Other errors specific to grammar included:

- Use of *ser* and *estar* (*yo soy bien*)
- Gender of nouns (*la problema, el dificultad*)
- Incorrect position of object pronouns or failure to use the object pronouns (*ellos visitan me, ellos tu visitan*).

Vocabulary was also an area of concern, as candidates seemed to be unaware of certain expressions like *a menudo* and *gracias*, which many of them were unable to spell.

Recommendations

- Teachers should continue to provide the necessary exposure to these two question types and give students constant practice in developing the contextual announcement and dialogue.
- Students should be exposed to basic vocabulary and expressions related to different types of announcements/advertisements. Some examples of pertinent phrases are: *se busca, se solicita, se vende, se requiere, se ofrece, se presenta, aviso, anuncio, atención, peligro, cuidado, dificultad, favor de, para más información.*
- Students should be engaged in grammar exercises where they are assisted in recognizing their errors as well as that of their peers, and attempt to make the necessary corrections. Special attention must be given to the areas of weakness outlined in this report as well as in those of previous reports so that the repeated errors may be noted and addressed. (Examples: the personal 'a', *ser* and *estar*, subject/verb agreement, noun/adjective agreement, the possessives, expressing possession using 'de').

Section IV (Question 6) – Reading Comprehension

This question assessed candidates' ability to read a passage in Spanish and then demonstrate comprehension skills by responding in English to questions posed in English based on the passage read.

Demands of the Question

This passage was set at a level appropriate for candidates. There were no structures that should have impeded a candidate's ability to read and comprehend. Candidates, however, seemed more comfortable responding to questions that did not require too much information.

Candidates' Performance

Overall, candidates responded satisfactorily to the questions asked and adhered to the rubric of the section. There were not many instances of the use of 'Spanglish', nor of responses in Spanish. However, there were some candidates who did not comprehend the passage, and so their responses bore little likeness to what was presented for their comprehension. Generally, most candidates understood the subject matter.

Candidates' Strengths

Questions (a), (b) and (c) were handled very well. Questions (e) and (h) were handled fairly satisfactorily. These questions required candidates to respond to 'what' and 'how' questions that did not demand advanced thought processes.

Candidates' Weaknesses

Questions (d), (f), (g), (i) and (j) presented some challenges for candidates. These were the questions that probed deeper at the candidates' comprehension skills, calling for them to offer explanations, describe a series of events or draw inferences.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question (a): How is Mr Rojas described?

Suggested response: Mr Rojas was a strong smoker.

Incorrect response: Mr Rojas was a stubborn person.

The responses to this question were quite good except where candidates did not recognize *fuerte* or *fumador*.

Question (b): On what does Mr Rojas spend most of his salary?

Suggested response: Mr Rojas spends most of his salary on cigarettes.

Incorrect response: Mr Rojas spends his salary on clothes.

There were very few incorrect responses. Some candidates substituted ‘cigars’ for ‘cigarettes’.

Question (c): Why does Mr Rojas look forward to his relatives’ visit?

Suggested response: They brought him gifts and cigarettes.

Incorrect response: They were smokers like him and he could smoke with them.

Of the first three questions, this was the most challenging to candidates who saw ‘watches’ and not ‘gifts’, confusing *regalos* with *relojes*.

Question (d): State THREE things that Mr Rojas’ wife complains about.

Suggested response: She complains that their clothes, their furniture and their hair smell of smoke.

Incorrect response: She complains that the horse and Mr Rojas smells.

This question required three things to be named from a possible five. Most candidates understood this. However, some did not grasp the idea that the house and its contents smelled of smoke. There were a few candidates who confused *cabello* with *caballo* and thought that a horse was involved. Full marks would have required the candidates to not only list the correct items, but to be specific about the consequences of his smoking — that everything absorbed the smoke and that she was fed up of hearing the same resolution to stop smoking every year.

Question (e): What is the New Year’s resolution Mr Rojas always makes?

Suggested response: He always says that he would quit smoking.

Incorrect response: He always says that he would smoke less/not so much.

Most candidates offered the correct response. Some however, lost marks for qualifying the answer by adding that ‘he would smoke less’.

Question (f): Why did Mr Rojas put his hand out of the window while he was driving?

Suggested response: He put his hand out of the window to throw away the cigarette (butt).

Incorrect response: He put his hand out so that the car would not smell of smoke.

Too many candidates did not get the correct response here. The word *colillo* seemed not to be known, and so some thought it was a ‘flame’ or ‘ashes’. Others thought that it was to avoid having his wife complain as they thought that she also complained about the smell of smoke in the car. Also *echar* was seen as ‘to drop’ or ‘to put out’ and not ‘to throw out’.

Question (g): What happened immediately after Mr Rojas put his hand out of the window?

Suggested response: The wind blew the cigarette back into the car.

Incorrect response: He lost his hand and had an accident.

While candidates understood that in the series of events he lost control of the car and almost had an accident, they did not understand what happened immediately after — the cigarette was blown back into the car.

Question (h): How did Mrs Rojas react?

Suggested response: She was surprised.

Incorrect response: She responded in a shocking manner.

Although the majority of candidates knew what her reaction was, there were a few who, based on how they answered the previous question, thought that she was scared. Moreover, some candidates confused their pronouns and responded using ‘He’ instead of ‘She’.

Question (i): Why did Mrs Rojas react in this way?

Suggested response: She thought that he had quit smoking but he lied.

Incorrect response: She reacted this way because it was an unexpected incident.

Many candidates lost marks for not realizing that it was his lying to her that caused her reaction. Some candidates, following on from previous answers, thought that she was in the car with him and that they had almost died.

Question (j): What lessons did Mr Rojas learn?

Suggested response: Mr Rojas learned that he should quit smoking because it could cost him his life.

Incorrect response: Mr Rojas learned that he should listen to his wife.

Except for the candidates who did not understand the passage, others gained some marks for recognizing that he realized that he should stop smoking, and what is more, that he could endanger himself.

Further Comments and Recommendations

Candidates are to be commended for adhering to the rubric. However, answering in a complete sentence does not mean that the candidate should supply answers that are not in passage. Neither should they provide answers that are required for other questions (for example, ‘He was a strong smoker who spent his salary on cigarettes’). In practising Reading Comprehension, teachers ought to encourage students to be as precise and concise as possible in their responses, especially where only one mark is awarded. It is hoped that teachers and future candidates will take note of the following recommendations:

- It cannot be stressed how important vocabulary is to comprehension. While going to websites and downloading puzzles and activities is recommended, there is a more accessible way — the cellphone. As technologically aware as young people seem to be, the extent to which the cellphone can be used has not been explored. In the Games application, there is the possibility of downloading Hangman in Spanish. It would serve the dual purpose of expanding vocabulary and general knowledge.

- In the July report, some websites were recommended for improving comprehension skills. Here are some additional ones:
 - spanish4teachers.org
 - teacher.scholastic.com
 - printablereadinggames.com

Paper 03 – Oral Examination

The oral examination assessed the ability of candidates to: (i) respond appropriately in Spanish to a number of situations testing specific functions, (ii) read aloud a short passage in Spanish and (iii) converse in Spanish by responding to questions based on four out of six topics set out in the syllabus, namely, Home and Family, School and Career, Sports and Recreation, and Travel.

Section I – Responses to Situations/Instructions

This section required candidates to produce appropriate responses in Spanish to situations/instructions described in English in keeping with the function specific to the situation.

Candidates' responses demonstrated a range of abilities. Those candidates who performed very well in this section produced responses which were not only appropriate but which were expressed correctly, demonstrating sound, grammatical structures, an ample range of vocabulary and the liberal use of idioms. These candidates delivered their responses without undue hesitation, in fact with spontaneity and self-confidence.

Many candidates performed poorly in this section. In many instances the weaknesses in grammar and vocabulary resulted in long delays in producing the responses, many of which were characterized by short one-word answers. Candidates who fell into this category showed an inability to use idiomatic expressions.

The more common grammatical errors included the following:

- Subject — verb agreement
* *Nosotros no tienen computadores*
- Noun — adjective agreement
* *me gusta el color roja*
- Incorrect verb tense
* *La semana que viene fui al cine.*
- *Ser* and *Estar*
* *Era enfermo*
- Conjugating the verb when the infinitive is needed.
* *Prometo tengo cuidado.*

***An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form, spelling or structure.**

Vocabulary errors included:

Regla instead of *regalo*
Bueno instead of *bien*
Soupa instead of *sopa*
Compentencion instead of *competencia*
Promeso instead of *prometo*
Regresar instead of *devolver*
Golpar instead of *golpear*

Recommendations

Students and teachers need to acquaint themselves with the functions as listed in the syllabus. These functions must be practised in a variety of situations/instructions with students being encouraged to respond orally. A few functions should be practised each term from the lower forms and right up to the examination year.

Section II – Reading Passages

In this section, candidates were assessed on their ability to read a passage (125–130 words). Candidates were expected to correctly pronounce the discrete sounds of the language, to exhibit good intonation and read in a fluent manner. Performance on this section ranged from very good to weak. Candidates who performed very well demonstrated a good knowledge of the Spanish sound system, showed ability in applying the rules of accentuation and stress and were fluent in their delivery. Those in this superior category were obviously well prepared through adequate practice in reading aloud.

Unfortunately, for far too many candidates the reading component of the oral examination proved to be a daunting challenge. It was indeed disheartening to hear so many candidates struggle with Spanish pronunciation to which they should have been exposed for at least five years. Production of the discrete sounds of the language, particularly the vowel sounds, was a painful experience for these lower performing candidates. It was obvious that they understood little or nothing of what they were reading.

Among the pronunciation errors which were presented were the following:

- The pronunciation of the ‘g’ sound in Spanish. Weaker candidates displayed no distinction between hard and soft ‘g’ in words like *Generos*, *ingeniero*, *indígenas*.
- The pronunciation of the silent letter ‘h’.
Herencias, *hombres*, *humanidades*, *hace*
- The mispronunciation of the ‘ll’.
Amarilla, *bullicio*, *allí*
- The anglicizing of cognates.
Responsabilidades, *profesión*, *carnaval*
- A disregard for the placement of stress particularly in words with accents.
Quizás, *despertó*, *mapalé*, *domésticos*

- Words that were difficult for candidates included *hogareño*, *obstaculizaron*, *arraigado*, *representativo*.

Recommendations

Pronunciation, intonation and fluency can only be mastered by constantly practising the reading aloud of the language. As often as possible the teacher must use Spanish in the classroom so that students will be exposed to the auditory nuances of the language. Where possible, students should be exposed to native speakers or recorded material of an authentic nature.

Section III – Guided Conversation

This section of the oral examination assessed the ability of candidates to respond to a number of questions based on four topics specified in the syllabus. For this examination the topics chosen were Home and Family, School and Career, Sports and Recreation, and Travel. Candidates were asked four questions on each topic and were assessed using the criteria of comprehension and spontaneity, fluency and correctness of expression.

This section continues to be the most challenging part of the oral examination. Only a small percentage of candidates demonstrated competence in conversing easily and accurately. Such candidates were spontaneous in their answers which tended to be extended and exhibited a wide range of vocabulary, idiom and sound grammatical structures. It was evident that these candidates had spent much time honing their conversational skills through constant drills and mock oral exercises.

Most candidates struggled with this conversation component of the examination. Very often they did not understand the question asked and even if they did, they were handicapped by their limited vocabulary and restricted grammatical competence. It was obvious that many candidates memorized certain responses which they gave regardless of the question asked. Requests that questions be repeated were frequent and very often no response was forthcoming.

The weaknesses revealed in this section were not dissimilar to those in Section I. Fundamental grammatical structures like verb tenses, agreement, *ser* and *estar*, *por* and *para* and object pronouns were frequently not known.

The following are some specific problems as they relate to some of the questions asked.

Home and Family

¿Quiénes viven en tu casa?

Some candidates proceeded to give a description of where their house is located.

¿Te entiendes bien con tu mamá?

Many candidates did not understand the word *entenderse*.

Common answers were: *Sí, mi mamá entiende bien*.

School and Career

Cuando no recibes buenas notas, ¿qué haces para mejorarlas?

Many candidates started their responses with *hace* or *hago*.

¿Por qué es importante estudiar idiomas extranjeros?

Many candidates did not have the vocabulary to answer this question.

Sports/Recreation

Some candidates were not familiar with the word 'Reggaeton'.

¿Qué piensas de los concursos de belleza?

Most candidates did not know 'concursos de belleza'.

Travel

¿Cuál es el medio de transporte que usas más?

Many candidates did not understand the word *medio*. Common responses were *Tenemos carros, autobuses...*

¿Qué se puede hacer para evitar los accidentes de tráfico?

Very few candidates were able to give a good response to this question. Most of them were unable to provide an appropriate answer.

Recommendations

The weak performance of candidates was reflective of a lack of preparation for this section. Opportunities must be created in the classroom for students to hear and to produce the language. It was apparent that for many candidates they had little or no practice in this type of testing. There is a need for mock oral examinations to be conducted with frequency particularly in the year of examination.