

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

JANUARY 2011

**SPANISH
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

**Copyright © 2011 Caribbean Examinations Council
St Michael, Barbados
All rights reserved.**

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2011 January examination was written by 627 candidates, compared with 633 in 2010. However, the percentage of candidates achieving acceptable grades (I–III) declined from 69 per cent in 2010 to 60 per cent in 2011. Although some candidates displayed the usual level of linguistic competence, spontaneity, fluency and accuracy, there was an increased number who demonstrated poor grammatical and vocabulary skills. This was especially apparent in Paper 02 and to a lesser extent, in Paper 01.

Teachers are encouraged to continue being innovative and creative in their teaching strategies, using a variety of activities to make learning relevant, personal and meaningful to students.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprises two sections, assesses 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. There was a decline in the percentage of candidates achieving the top grades on this paper.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section I – Directed Situations

In this section, candidates were presented with ten situations to which they were required to provide written responses in Spanish. The situations demanded that candidates recognize the function they were required to perform, all within the scope of their experience at this level. Candidates were assessed on the appropriateness of their responses and quality of language used. With regard to quality of language, candidates were expected to demonstrate their control of appropriate grammatical structures and knowledge of relevant vocabulary, both expressed in clearly worded concise responses. In assessing appropriateness, each response was categorized as fully or partially appropriate and was awarded marks accordingly. Inappropriate responses were awarded no mark, even if the language of expression was flawless.

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 candidates should be familiar with.

Candidates' Performance

Candidates performed creditably on this section. It was evident that the situations were very straightforward and did not present any misunderstandings or vastly different perspectives from the point of view of the candidates. The majority of candidates were able to score passing grades. The poor performers showed difficulty with basic vocabulary and grammar. Some distortion occurred in expression owing to incorrect word order in cases where candidates expressed themselves in the same way they would in English. Frequently, candidates put *no* after the verb, for example, *mi mamá estaba no bien* and *el teléfono es no funciona*.

Candidates' Strength

Candidates showed particular strength in the knowledge of vocabulary demanded by the questions although there were spelling errors.

Candidates' Weakness

General weakness was noted mainly in grammar — use of verbs and tense, correct form of the command and spelling.

The following are some examples of errors made with respect to grammar.

- Differentiating between *porque* and *a causa de*.
**Está porque de mío* instead of *es a causa de mí*.
- Use of the infinitive after *poder/querer*.
**Yo puedo voy...*
- Difficulty in using *bañar* as a transitive verb; many candidates wrote *Báñate el perro* et cetera.
- Errors of vocabulary, for example:

<i>Anoche</i>	instead of	<i>esta noche</i>
<i>Viaje</i>	instead of	<i>excursión</i>
<i>Salir</i>	instead of	<i>dejar</i>
<i>Llamas</i>	instead of	<i>llamadas</i>
<i>Trabajar</i>	instead of	<i>funcionar</i>
<i>Soy a</i>	instead of	<i>estoy en</i>
<i>La cine</i>	instead of	<i>el cine</i>
<i>Tener + inf</i>	instead of	<i>tener que + inf</i>
<i>Ser with enfermo</i>		
<i>Es no + gerund</i>		

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

- Errors of spelling

There was a high incidence of the following words being misspelt:

**Commercial*

**projecto*

Comments on Individual Situations

Situation 1

You are alone at your friend's home in Caracas and need to leave the house. Write the note you leave telling your friend about your whereabouts.

(Function – providing information)

Suggested response: *Fui a... Estoy en ...*

Candidates had no problem finding an appropriate response. Errors occurred in misspelling *mercado* and the use of *a* after *estar* rather than *en*, for example, *Estoy *al supermercado*. In addition, some candidates did not indicate their whereabouts. When *salir* was used *de* was often omitted when a place was mentioned. Other errors included *a el, al* for *en* to indicate where they were. *Fue* was frequently used for *fui*.

Situation 2

Your neighbour wants to sell his car and requests your help to make a sign. What does the sign say? (Function – providing information)

Suggested response: *Se vende/ para la venta/ carro para vender...*

This question generated some creative responses and was managed adequately by most candidates. However, it was poorly done by some candidates for whom vocabulary for the word 'sale' proved difficult. Instead of *venta* they wrote *sale*, * *carro por sale*.

In addition, too many candidates used *por* in instances where they should have used *para*.

Situation 3

Your school has embarked on a Spanish awareness campaign. Write one important school rule which you can post on the notice board.

(Function – providing information)

Suggested response: *No se permite.../ Deber.../ Affirmative command.*

Some candidates seemed to have read only the first part of the situation; therefore, they wrote a response which had no reference to a school rule. However, those candidates who responded well displayed a good grasp of the command form, for example, *No se permite fumar/ Mantengan limpia la escuela*.

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

Some candidates interpreted the question to mean that the school rule should relate to the learning of Spanish or a language and wrote for example, *El español es importante*. Weaker candidates were unable to produce the imperative, especially the negative form.

Situation 4

Anita has invited you to the movies but you would prefer to do something else. Respond to her email, suggesting an alternative activity.

(Function – suggesting an alternative)

Suggested response: *Mejor vamos a .../ ¿Por qué no ...?*

Candidates responded well to this question. Many of them used the verb *prefiero* reflexively, for example, *Me prefiero ir al ...* or used *salir* in place of *ir*, for example, *prefiero salir en el parque*.

Situation 5

Your aunt is going away for a weekend and you promised to look after her dog. She has left you a note to remind you of something you must do. What does the note say?

(Function – giving instructions)

Suggested response: *Imperative/No olvides + infinitive/Recuerda + infinitive/tienes que + infinitive/Debes + infinitive*.

Many candidates simply used the verb *mirar* instead of *cuidar* and responded with a translation of the cue rather than a reminder of what they must do.

A common error was the use of the reflexive second person to refer to the dog; for example, **Báñate cada día*. The verb *bañar* was frequently used whether appropriately as *baña el perro* or inappropriately as in **te bañar...* Candidates even used *lavar* as a synonym for *bañar*. *Comer* was also frequently used instead of *dar de comer/ alimentar*.

Some responses were not specific to the care of the dog. The expression ‘to walk the dog’ was rendered by *andar el perro*. Finally, *perro* was often misspelt as *pero*.

Situation 6

You need your father’s permission to go somewhere but he’s away. Write him an email requesting his approval. (Function – requesting permission)

Suggested response: *¿Puedo ir a + place?/Hay una fiesta el sábado; me das permiso par ir?*

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

This situation was fairly well done. In many responses candidates omitted the request for approval. Most of them simply stated what they wanted or where they wanted to go without requesting permission. *Quiero ir a la fiesta. Me gustaría ir...*

Two common errors made by candidates were the failure to use the infinitive after *puedo*, and *en sábado* being used instead of *el sábado*.

Situation 7

There is a problem with your new cellular phone and you have taken it back to the store. Provide a written explanation to the salesperson.

(Function – Expressing a complaint)

Suggested response: ... *no funciona/no puedo hacer llamadas etc.*

Perennial errors occurred in this question. There were many instances where *trabajar* was used by candidates instead of *funcionar*, or where they anglicized *funcionar* to read **funcionar* and the misspelling of **cellular*. *Teléfono* was frequently misspelt as **telephono/fone/fono*. This question also highlighted the habit of translating word for word, for example, **es no funcionando*.

Situation 8

You send an email to your teacher explaining why your group project is not finished. What reason do you give? (Function – Providing an explanation)

Suggested response: *Nuestro proyecto no esta listo porque estaba enfermo/estoy enfermo.*

Many candidates used the French verb *finir* in this question, but yet again *grupo* and *proyecto* were often misspelt. Some candidates lost marks for simply saying that the task was unfinished, without giving a reason as required by the question.

Situation 9

You would like to interview a celebrity who is visiting your city. Write him/her an email explaining why you need to interview him/her.

(Function – Making a request/explaining reasons)

Suggested response: *Necesito hacerle una entrevista para la revista de mi escuela.*

Most candidates were guilty of using the familiar form in this question and very often simply gave a reason for the interview without a request. Candidates frequently used the English word interview instead of *entrevista*. *Pedir* was also often used instead of *preguntar* or *hacer preguntas*.

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

Situation 10

You have disappointed your best friend. Write an email apologizing for what you have done. (Function – Providing an apology)

Suggested response: *Siento haber.../Siento...*

In this question the majority of candidates were able to give an apology but many seemed to have disregarded the second aspect, saying what they had done. The structure *sentir + inf/ sentir que...* presented great difficulty for the candidates who wrote *lo siento que...*

Recommendations

- Teachers should consider compiling the various structures that are common in the directed situations section and give regular practice to students. Alternatives to the command form should comprise part of the preparation for this section.
- It is highly recommended that candidates read the situations carefully before attempting a response.
- Teachers should ensure that students develop an adequate command of essential grammar and wide vocabulary to enable them to handle this section of the examination with greater competence.

Section II – Letter/Composition

This section is intended to assess candidates' ability to produce written language within the parameters set out in the syllabus. In addition to mastery of relevant vocabulary, idiom, and language structure, the ability to express ideas clearly and coherently is emphasized. The two options given were the letter and the composition, each of which was marked out of 30.

Demands of the Section

Both questions catered to all range of abilities. Most candidates attempted to answer one of the questions. They were given the opportunity to use a wide range of tenses and the more competent candidates used their tenses appropriately. However, the composition posed some ambivalence for some candidates as they misinterpreted whether they were to use the present, past or future tenses. Both the letter and the composition were popular among the candidates.

Candidates' Performance

Most candidates attempted to answer all four elements of the questions. Performance ranged from very limited to excellent. The general performance was within average to above average. However, few candidates were in the excellent category. Most candidates tried to stay within the word limit.

Candidates' Strengths

Most candidates followed the rubric for both questions. Several used the correct format for the letter, thus ensuring the use of appropriate expressions for the opening and closing, expressions which appeared well learnt. Tenses were fairly well known in addition to the appropriate vocabulary. The more competent candidates used a wide range of vocabulary and idioms. A few included the element of 'suspense' with the identification of the visitor in the composition.

Examples of Good Performance

Candidates with sound knowledge of grammar and vocabulary performed creditably. Examples of expressions used included the following:

Espero que te vayas bien.
Espero que tengas buena salud.
Perdona que no te haya escrito.
En un abrir y cerrar de los ojos.

Tenses were well used at times:

Mi hermana limpiará los dormitorios.
Decidí trabajar.
Con mi primer salario quisiera comprar ropa.

Less competent candidates were able to use simple vocabulary plus the verb *ser* in their description of the visitor; for example, *Mi tía es alta y muy bonita.*

Candidates' weaknesses with examples of errors

Several weaknesses were evident in scripts, examples of which are shown below.

- A few candidates wrote the date in words:
 * *El doce de abril de dos mil once* instead of *12 de abril de 2011.*
- At times the address was too long when all that was necessary was the city.

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

- Errors of vocabulary
 - There were literal translations:
 - **Ella ha mirado bonita.*
 - **Dónde haces trabajar?*
 - **Ella boca iba gusta agua.*
- The literal translations showed a lack of the appropriate vocabulary and difficulty in constructing a sentence in Spanish.
- Other errors of vocabulary included:
 - **tenía mucho divertido* to mean ‘I had fun’.
 - pedir* and *preguntar* were used inappropriately to mean ‘to ask’.
 - querer* and *amar* to mean ‘to love’. They were often used with things and not people.
 - **emocionante* to mean ‘excited’
 - **la trabaja* to mean ‘work’
 - Use of false friends; for example, *asistir* to mean ‘to assist’
 - The word for salary was frequently unknown – **salaria, mis dineros*
 - **primo, premio* to mean ‘first’, instead of *primero*
 - **el visitor* rather than *el visitante* to mean ‘visitor’
 - **estaba mirando para* to mean ‘to look for’
 - **estaba alegría* to mean ‘happy’
 - **¡como interesante!* to mean “How” in an expression
 - The unnecessary use of a preposition – *buscando** *por*

Errors of grammar

Expression suffered due to grammatical incorrectness. Examples follow:

- Failure to recognize the use of subjunctive in constructions such as –
 - **cuando recibo mi primer salario compraré....*
- Clumsy expressions such as
 - **mi trabajo es en la tienda* instead of *trabajo en la tienda*
- Frequent use of *a* for ‘at a place’ instead of *en*
 - **compro ropa a la tienda*
- The verb *decidir* was often followed by *a*
 - decido* **a trabajar*
- Candidates were doubtful as to the use of *por* and *para*
- The personal *a* was often omitted –
 - visita* **mi familia*
- The contraction *a+el = al* was sometimes unknown

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

- Sometimes the incorrect gender was given, for example, *a la hotel, a la hospital*
- The word ‘on’ was translated in dates – *en el viernes*
- Fundamental errors – *Se llama es/ es treinta años/ ser un veterinario*
- Errors were made with verbs and tenses:
*Mi madre *dijome*
*Yo *aplicado*
*Yo *miró*
*Estaba *veniendo*
- Verb and adjective agreement
**los viejos papel / mi tía es alto*
- The use of the definite and indefinite articles together
**una la tele*

Recommendations

- Continuous, productive practice is needed to ensure success. Grammatical concepts and structures need to be reinforced consistently. Students ought to be exposed to the grammatical rules, not just in grammatical exercises, but in context when given practice papers.
- Although a translation is no longer a question in the CXC examination, teachers ought to recognize its effectiveness as a teaching tool. Translation from one’s native tongue to the foreign language teaches students the nuances of both languages and gives them a greater understanding of how to apply the grammatical rules. This will help them to understand the structure of expressions which they have learnt and not just repeat them from memory.
- A thorough preparation of students for the oral examination, coupled of course with adequate study on the part of the students, will also help to bring forth success in the written component. Some of what is learnt for the oral examination can be used in the written examination as well.
- Greater exposure to the language through reading, writing, listening, and speaking is recommended. This can be done not just through the use of past papers. Other useful means of learning are games, interesting classroom activities, projects, overseas trips. In addition, the Internet ought to be explored in order to find useful websites which can be recommended to students for enhancement of their learning.

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

Section III – Contextual Announcement/Contextual Dialogue

This section required candidates to choose to write either (i) a contextual announcement or (ii) a contextual dialogue completion. Cues in English were provided for both options.

Performance on this section clearly revealed that the questions were not beyond the capability of the average candidate.

Demands of the Section

Both the contextual announcement and contextual dialogue were within the scope of candidates' ability. The questions were adequate and reasonable for candidates at this level and within their active vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. The structure of the questions was quite simple and straightforward. Questions were relevant to candidates' experiences and allowed for flexibility and manipulation of the Spanish language.

Candidates' Performance on the Contextual Announcement

While fewer candidates attempted this question compared to the contextual dialogue, their responses in terms of content were lengthier and showcased greater creativity regarding their ideas and general expression. Some candidates who attempted this question used the word **clubo* for club. Several candidates showed the need for more practice in the use and formation of the imperative. The word 'advantage' also seemed unknown to most candidates who wrote **advantage* instead of *ventaja* most of the time.

Candidates' Performance on the Contextual Dialogue

Most candidates attempted this question but for the most part their responses, in terms of content, were inadequate. The first question posed, *¿Con quién hablo?* proved to be problematic as candidates found great difficulty in translating 'it's me' into Spanish. Some responses provided included **es mí*, or **es yo*.

In addition, many candidates missed the cue in which they were supposed to set an alternative date. At times they repeated certain parts of the printed dialogue. For example, they repeated *tenía tantas ganas de salir contigo* and used *no puedes* instead of *no puedes*.

Responses by candidates were limited due to poor vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure, for example, **no voy con tu*. At other times responses were disjointed or were made up of English or French words. Some responses were mere repetitions of the cues since some candidates concentrated more on looking for words and expressions than on answering in a coherent manner.

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

Candidates' Strengths

- Most candidates understood what was required of them in terms of the rubrics and hardly any of the scripts were formatted differently. They wrote the announcement/dialogue with the relevant content according to the requirements.
- For the most part, candidates were able to use the cues well, especially in the announcement.

Examples of Good Performance

While there were not many outstanding scripts, some candidates were able to write correct Spanish. Correct and greater use of the subjunctive was seen in the better scripts. Samples of these are:

- *Mis padres quieren que venga con ellos a la casa de mis abuelos.*
- *Es lástima que no puedas ir a la fiesta.*
- *Mi mamá quiere que yo me quede...*
- Impersonal expressions such as *'es posible que...'* *'es importante que...'* were used.

There was also an improvement in simple expressions such as *'por seguro'*, *'lo más pronto posible'*, *'favor de'*, *'¿qué te parece?'*, *'tener que'*, *'asistir a'*.

Other examples of good performance include:

Te prometo que todo será diferente.
No puedo acompañarte al concierto el sábado.
¿Tienes otro compromiso el próximo viernes?
Tengo que asistir a la boda de mi prima.
.....el próximo viernes en vez de hoy.

Correct use of a variety of tenses (present, future, past) was seen:

Voy a estar/quedar en contacto contigo siempre.
Mi madre murió...
Por eso te llamo.
Soy yo.

Candidates' Weaknesses

Some candidates could not follow the flow of the dialogue. Responses were therefore not given accurately in the appropriate places and some important cues were not responded to. For example, there was a lack of response to the cue *'no tengo nada para esta fecha'*.

At times there was a problem with the word limit, especially in the dialogue where candidates fell below the required number of words. Additionally, there was incorrect use of subject-verb agreement, although candidates would have the correct verb and tense for example, *la reunión *tendrás lugar.*

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

On several occasions candidates failed to use the infinitive after *tener que*, omitted the preposition after the verb *ayudar* and misused *ser* and *estar*. Distinguishing between polite and familiar forms of address also proved difficult for some candidates who used the polite form to address their friends.

Examples of errors

The following were among the more common errors made by candidates:

**En sábado* instead of *el sábado*

Gracias para instead of *gracias por*

Anoche instead of *esta noche*

Estoy instead of *soy Isabella*; also **es mi, Carlos*

Confusion of *fecha* for *cita*

Frequent use of **puedemos* instead of *podemos*

*Puedo *voy* instead of *puedo ir*

**Con tú* instead of *contigo*

*Mi abuela *es en el hospital* instead of *está* or *mi mamá *es mal* instead of *está*

Misuse of *por* and *para*, for example, *tengo un regalo *por tu* instead of *tengo un regalo para ti*

**Estoy muy siento* instead of *lo siento mucho*

**A la cine* instead of *al cine*

Recommendations

Teachers need to reemphasize the importance of following the rubric especially for the dialogue with respect to length. Teachers also need to reinforce the finer grammatical points such as:

- use of prepositions after verbs
- no stem changes in the future tense
- use of the infinitive after *poder, querer, ir a*

Candidates need more practice with

- *ser/estar*
- Using definite/indefinite articles, for example, ‘*ser **un** miembro*’
- idiomatic expressions
- the order of adjectives and nouns in sentences
- the use of *por* and *para*

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

Section IV – Reading Comprehension

This section assessed candidates' ability to read and comprehend a short passage in Spanish and respond in English to ten questions set on the passage. The marks allocated ranged from one to three.

Demands of the Section

Generally, questions were well within the range of candidates at this level and responses should have been much better done than they were.

Candidates' Performance

Overall performance on this section was less than satisfactory, which was surprising, based on the straightforward nature of the questions that were asked.

Candidates' Strengths

Candidates answered Question 10, the analytical question, better than most of the recall questions.

Candidates' Weaknesses

Lack of knowledge of vocabulary led candidates to arrive at a different interpretation of the story. Some were very creative at writing answers that bore no relationship with the passage. For example, *debajo de* was interpreted as 'behind'; *desmayado* was interpreted as 'dismayed' and *valor* was interpreted as 'value'. Candidates also showed unfamiliarity with the word *Nochevieja*. Many confused a walk in the park as being the main event as opposed to the walk through the woods. Many candidates stated that Manuel was hiding rather than stretched out or lying or had fainted.

There was also little attention paid to the tenses used in the passage.

Candidates did not place emphasis on understanding the demands of each question by paying attention to the mark scheme as an indication of the amount of information needed to answer questions. In addition, many responses did not fit the question asked.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1: How was Manuel viewed in his town?

Suggested response: Manuel was strong.

This question was well done generally.

Question 2: What about him encouraged this view?

Suggested response: He showed a lot of courage and strength.

Generally, candidates responded correctly to this question. The candidates who made mistakes had difficulty with vocabulary, equating *valor* for ‘value’ and *fuera* for ‘force’.

Question 3: With whom was Manuel impatient?

Suggested response: With young people who seemed weak.

This question was generally well done.

Question 4: What special occasion was approaching?

Suggested response: New Year’s Eve

This question proved difficult for candidates since they either focused on the walk as the occasion and not New Year’s Eve; some candidates did not understand the meaning of *Nochevieja* or rewrote the Spanish word.

Question 5: What would last three hours?

Suggested response: A walk in the woods.

This question was not well done. Some candidates simply wrote ‘walk’ rather than ‘walk in the woods’. Those unsure of *paseo* wrote journey, trip, travel, party, announcement, fireworks display.

Question 6: How did Manuel view this activity?

Suggested response: Like a simple walk in the park.

This question presented problems for some candidates whose answers varied and were unrelated to the passage.

Question 7: How did his friends’ view differ from his?

Suggested response: They were afraid because they had heard stories of strange things seen in the woods.

This was one of the more difficult questions for the candidates as many did not know the English translation for *dar miedo*, *cuentos*, *extraño*, among others. Some candidates mentioned that their views differed but did not state how.

Question 8: How are the sights described in the passage?

Suggested response: Scary.

This question presented little difficulty.

Question 9: What was a surprising sight?

Suggested response: Manuel lying under a tree.

This question was one of the more difficult ones for the candidates since they were unfamiliar with the words *estirado* and *desmayado*. Many candidates offered the response “Manuel hiding behind a tree.”

Question 10: In what way would Manuel’s reputation be affected?

Suggested response: He was not as brave as he appeared to be.

This question was generally well done, with even the weaker candidates managing to earn marks.

Recommendations

Emphasis needs to be placed on candidates’ understanding of the demands of questions; they need to pay attention to the marks allotted as an indication of the amount of information needed to answer questions.

Responses should make sense, be logical and show some fit with the question asked.

Paper 03 – Oral Examination

This paper assessed candidates’ ability to: (1) produce appropriate responses in Spanish to a number of situations requiring specific functions, (2) read aloud a short passage in Spanish and (3) converse in Spanish by responding to questions based on four out of six topics set out in the syllabus, namely, School and Career, Sports and Recreation, Home and Family, and Daily Routine.

Section I – Responses to Situations/Instructions

This section required candidates to produce appropriate responses in Spanish to situations/instructions described in English.

Candidates demonstrated a range of abilities in the way they handled the responses. Some candidates performed very well in this section, producing responses which were not only appropriate but which were expressed correctly, exhibiting a good range of vocabulary couched in sound grammatical structures. These candidates were able to deliver with spontaneity, confidence and a high degree of fluency.

On the other side of the performance spectrum, many candidates struggled with this section. They were bridled with restrictive vocabulary, poor knowledge of basic grammatical structures and an almost total ignorance of idioms. Many of these candidates attempted to give a response but because of the limitations stated above, many times their responses merely consisted of words carelessly flung together. Their responses lacked fluency and were characterized by long pauses, hesitancy and lack of confidence in terms of oral delivery.

The following is a sample of the more common grammatical errors:

- Subject–verb agreement
* *Yo no quiere ese vestido*
- Noun–adjective agreement
* *La chica es alto y delgado*
- Ser and Estar
* *¿Cómo estaba tu viaje?*
- Por and Para
* *¿Cuánto dinero para un billete?*
- Omission of the reflexive pronoun when conjugating reflexive verbs
* *... levantaba muy tarde*
- Difficulty in using commands
* *No anda por esta calle*
- Conjugating the verb when the infinitive is needed
* *Yo prometo limpio mi dormitorio.*
- Difficulty with object pronouns
* *El director llamó me*

Vocabulary errors included:

infierno for *enfermo*

bebe for *bebida*

salir for *dejar*

The Spanish word for ‘fork’ was generally not known.

Recommendations

Candidates need to be acquainted with the list of functions that they are expected to know, as contained in the syllabus. Teachers are encouraged to develop exercises to practise these functions orally. Constant practice, beginning in the lower forms, will build students’ confidence in expressing themselves orally.

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

Section II – Reading Passages

This section assessed candidates' ability to read a passage (125–130 words), demonstrating correct pronunciation of discrete sounds, good intonation and fluency. Candidates' performance ranged from very good in some cases to weak in others. Those who read well exhibited a working knowledge of the Spanish sound system, observed the rules of accentuation and stress and were fluent in their reading. It was evident that these candidates were adequately prepared and were given sufficient practice in reading aloud.

For many candidates the reading component of the oral examination was a formidable challenge. These candidates obviously only had a fleeting knowledge of how the Spanish sound system works. Their pronunciation was faulty and very anglicized in many cases. They read mechanically and it was painfully clear that they understood little or nothing of the passage they read.

The following are some of the problems which candidates presented:

- The pronunciation of the 'g' was particularly disturbing. Candidates failed to recognize the changes in pronunciation of 'g' before the vowels 'a', 'o' and 'u' and before 'e' and 'i'. This resulted in the following words being wrongly pronounced: *prestigio, Argentina, escogen, regimen*.
- Many candidates seemed not to grasp the basic pronunciation of the Spanish vowels 'e' and 'i'. This was obvious when they attempted to pronounce *educativo, importante, ingresos, familiar*.

Diphthongs were generally mispronounced. Many candidates broke up the diphthongs into two syllables, not expressing them as a single unit. This was clearly seen in the following words: *aula, mutuo, nuevos, consigue*.

- The anglicizing of cognates: *situación, diálogo, principal, opción, base, autoridad*.
- Articulation of 'ñ' in words such as *niñez, navideño*.
- Ignorance of the placement of stress generally and particularly in the case of words with accents.
- Words that were difficult for candidates include *aprendizaje, aguinaldos, predilección, habichuelas, crustáceos*.

Recommendations

The reading disabilities outlined above are clearly indicative of a lack of or inadequate preparation and practice in reading aloud. Candidates need to be exposed to authentic Spanish material to truly understand Spanish pronunciation and intonation. Teachers need to be constantly using Spanish in the classroom and to provide opportunities for students to produce the language as often as possible.

Section III – Guided Conversation

This section of the oral examination assesses the ability of candidates to respond to a number of questions based on four topics. This year candidates were tested on School and Career, Sports and Recreation, Home and Family, and Daily Routine. Using the criteria of comprehension and spontaneity, fluency and expression, candidates were assessed on their responses to four questions on each of the four topics.

The Guided Conversation continues to be the section which is most challenging for candidates. Some candidates demonstrated competence in conversing easily and accurately. These candidates were spontaneous in their answers which tended to be extended, demonstrating a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. The majority of candidates struggled with this section, clear evidence that they were woefully ill-prepared. The main problem was the lack of comprehension of many of the questions. This resulted in the constant request that questions be repeated. Even when the questions were understood, candidates struggled to express themselves, constrained by their limited vocabulary and deficiency in the knowledge of basic grammatical structures.

Among the weaknesses revealed in this section were:

- Very limited vocabulary. Words like *asignaturas*, *vestirse*, *instalaciones*, *barrio*, *saliste*, *dirías*, *ocupada* were widely not known.
- Problems with noun–adjective agreement, as well as word order.
mi casa es rojo; *mi vida es aburrido*; *favorito pasatiempo*.
- Subject–verb agreement
Los estudiantes es...
Mi escuela ofrécen...
Los deportes es...
Mi hermano limpio...
- Conjugation of verbs. In addition to using the wrong person of the verb, verbs were often not conjugated.
Yo practicar el fútbol.
Mis amigos escuchar la música.

- Problems with reflexive verbs (Omission and wrong reflexive pronoun)
Levanto a las siete
Te levanto temprano
Me estudio...
- The use of *Ser* and *Estar*
El deporte popular está...
Mi casa es en...

Recommendations

Students must be encouraged from very early to produce the language orally. If they practise ten oral questions per term from Year One, they would have mastered 150 questions by the end of the fifth year. Too often teachers wait until the final year to begin to consider the importance of the oral examination.

Teachers should seize every opportunity to speak the language in the classroom, as well as to encourage students to respond orally in Spanish. This will serve to free students of the inhibition they experience in producing the foreign language.