

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

MAY/JUNE 2007

SPANISH

Copyright © 2007 Caribbean Examinations Council ®
St. Michael, Barbados
All rights reserved

SPANISH

GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

MAY/JUNE 2007

GENERAL COMMENTS

There were varying levels of performance ranging from excellent to poor with the overall performance being comparable to 2006. Several candidates demonstrated high levels of linguistic competence, spontaneity, fluency and accuracy.

It is important for candidates to be exposed to as many real-life situations as possible. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative and creative in teaching their students the difficult aspects of the language. Learning through dramatization, simulation and other fun-filled activities facilitates much retention and the development of communicative and other skills. Visits to Spanish-speaking countries and weekend intensive practice sessions could be organised by teachers.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01- Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprises two sections, tests candidates' ability 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 require candidates to have sufficient mastery of essential grammar and vocabulary. The performance on this year's paper was comparable to that of previous years.

Paper 02 – Free Response

Section 1 - Directed Situations

This question demands that candidates identify the function for which the situation forms the context, and demonstrate their control of appropriate grammatical structures and knowledge of relevant vocabulary in clearly worded, concise responses. The better candidates were able to satisfy these requirements. Candidates' performance on the whole ranged from outstanding to occasions when no attempt was made to answer the questions in the section.

Situation 1

“You are in the dentist's office after an extraction and need to speak to him/her urgently about your condition. What note do you give to the receptionist?”

Candidates failed to mention the urgency required for this question and focussed more on the condition instead. As a result, words such as *ahora*, *en seguida*, *inmediatamente* were not used. Vocabulary also posed a challenge, for example, “dentist”, and some candidates referred to other parts of the body in their answers besides the teeth or mouth. Some candidates had problems with the use of *me duele (n)...*, *tengo dolor de...* and *hablar con*. Many candidates were using *hablar a...* .

Situation 2

“Your brother/sister has gone out wearing something that belongs to you. What note do you leave on his/her room door to express your annoyance?”

This situation was generally fairly well done, but there were problems with the subjunctive, especially with commands – negative forms.

Situation 3

“Your family doctor has set up an e-mail service which allows patients to request the date and time of an appointment. What do you write to set up your appointment?”

Many candidates wrote answers which effectively fulfilled the function of requesting an appointment. However, quite a few stated the date but failed to include the time as well.

Situation 4

“You have missed an important meeting with the guidance counsellor. Write the brief note of explanation you send to him/her with another student.”

This situation was handled well by many candidates. Some candidates gave apologies instead of explanations. Those who wrote apologies frequently encountered difficulties with the subjunctive especially in expressions such as –*Siento que yo novenga*. *

Situation 5

“You are walking through the lobby of a hotel while the floor is being mopped. What sign do you see to alert guests?”

Generally candidates provided the information adequately. There is a need, however, to reinforce the need to use additional information with *cuidado*, for example – *Piso mojado*.

Situation 6

“Your father is travelling to Spain on business and asks you to e-mail his arrival information to the hotel. What do you write?”

Some candidates did not include a name to make the identity of the parent clear to the receiver of the message. For the most part, however, candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the situation.

Situation 7

“You are overseas watching television when you hear a friend of yours has won a prize in a literary competition. Write the email you send to him/her.”

This situation was generally well done by the majority of candidates. The use of *felicidad** should be discouraged. Only the plural *felicidades** is acceptable.

Situation 8

“You have to prepare a dish for dinner and find that you are missing one ingredient. Leave a note for your mother saying what you have gone to buy.”

Most candidates responded adequately/correctly to this situation. Limited vocabulary restricted some candidates. Problems with *por* and *para* were particularly noticeable in this section.

Situation 9

“You are trying to study for your examinations, but everybody keeps interrupting you. Write the sign you hang on your door.”

Generally this situation was fairly well handled. A few candidates lacked mastery of the negative command form and wrote instructions such as – *no molesta**.

Situation 10

“You missed a test at school and you need to explain to your teacher the reason. You send an e-mail. What does the e-mail say?”

This situation, just as in situation 4, was confused with an apology by some candidates who did not provide an explanation after apologising.

Main Problems Occurring in Section 1

Ser / estar

Por / para

Lo siento /siento followed by infinitive

Negative commands

Limited Vocabulary

Sample Responses

The following are excellent examples of responses submitted by candidates.

- (1) *Necesito hablar con el dentista lo más pronto posible.*
- (2) *Estoy muy enojada porque saliste con mi falda.*
- (3) *Me gustaría hacer una cita para el dos de mayo a las nueve de la mañana.*
- (4) *Lo siento pero no vine porque me sentía enferma.*
- (5) *Tengan cuidado porque el suelo está mojado.*
- (6) *José Jimenez llegará al hotel a las dos de la madrugada con dos maletas.*
- (7) *¡Felicitaciones!*
- (8) *Mamá, salí a comprar una zanahoria.*
- (9) *Estoy estudiando así no me molesten.*
- (10) *Señorita, lo siento pero no vine al colegio porque me sentía enferma.*

Section 2 – Letter/ Composition

This section is intended to assess the candidates’ ability to produce written language within the parameters set out by 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.

Most candidates wrote within the given context of the question. Stronger candidates were very creative in their approach while the weaker ones merely tried to answer each part of the questions, sometimes resulting in a very short version of the questions. The format of the letter was generally respected although some candidates still wrote the date in words rather than in figures.

It must be noted, however, that there were several scripts where similar errors were repeated. Generally candidates were able to meet the word length required. Some still need to be reminded about the 130 – 150 words. Those who went above were generally competent candidates in the very good category. Those who were below were the ones who could not write an acceptable level of Spanish.

Grammatical content

Inability to use the preterite/imperfect tenses. There were instances where the imperfect was used instead of the preterite, for example, *nosotros bailábamos y comíamos. Nosotros mirábamos la televisión.* In some instances candidates were unable to use the preterite and used the present, for example, *yo recibo un libro, mi abuela cocina. Mi cantante canta.* The imperfect *había* was not used, instead candidates used *hay* or *allí está**

Areas of concern

1. The irregular preterite tense was a problem; for example, *mi mamá hizo un pastel.* Mis padres me dijeron*, mis amigos venieron.* Mi mamá me dio.* Andamos.**

2. *Ser* vs *estar* were incorrectly used in several cases.

- i. *Mis amigos fueron allí**
- ii. *Yo era sorprendido**
- iii. *La fiesta está fantástica.**
- iv. *El regalo estaba una bicicleta**

3. Position of Object pronouns

- Mis padres dieronme**
- Mi papa dígame**
- Mi cantante besome**
- Mi novio besame**

4. Subjunctive

This generally was not properly handled except by the very good candidates.
Mis padres me dijeron que no llegas tarde

5. Agreements

- Subject verb
- Todo el mundo baileron**
- Mi novio y yo fui al concierto**

Noun adjective

*Mi comida favorito**

*Mi actriz favorito**

*Carne asado**

*Otros todos el mundo**

*Mis cumpleaños mucho personas todos las personas.**

6. Incorrect word order

i. *mi cumpleaños fiesta*

ii. *mi padre casa*

iii. *Air Supply concierto*

7. Inappropriate vocabulary

rosado - *asado*

holla - *hola*

perro - *pero*

tiempo - *vez*

dolores - *dólares*

carro - *caro*

delante de - *antes de*

que - *aquel*

se - *conozco*

reglas - *regales*

gusta - *como*

dar - *recibir*

8. Nouns used for verbs

nosotros *natación**

ellos *besos**

*él concierto**

*él alvazos**

*sorpresame**

9. Personal 'a' omitted

Mi madre invitó mis abuelas

Yo vi mi cantante favorito

10. *Para* vs *Por*

El canté por me

yo recibe un carro por mi cumpleaños

11. Spelling of "cumpleaños"

Use of "*cumpleaños feliz*" - *cumpleaños fiesta** for birthday party

12. Accentuation

13. Subject - verb concordance

Allí era for *había*

14. Conjugation of *sentir*
Use of *lo siento que* + subjunctive instead of *Siento que* + subjunctive
15. *A mi fiesta** instead of *en mi fiesta*
16. Use of *ser /estar*
17. *Y* becoming *e* before *i/hi*
18. Use of Imperfect vs Preterite
19. Disregard for sequence of tenses
20. *Cartas / cartes* for cards – birthday card
21. Position of adjective
22. Use of *su* to end letter – this attests to the familiar vs formal divide
23. Omission of *tan* in expressions - ¡*Qué noche tan buena!*
24. Use of subjunctive after *siento que, espero que*
25. Irregular preterites – *venir, server*
26. *Para nos* when the candidates want to write *para nosotros*

Other Areas of Concern

Grammar

1. Poor sentence structure
Example: *Mi favorito comida en mi cumpleañosfiesta**
2. Incorrect agreement and placement of adjectives (of all types)
Example: *mi primos, mis cumpleaños, rojo carro, favorito artista, blanco blusa**
3. Minimal comprehension of the use of *gustar*
Example: *había mucha comida gusta pollo, arroz...**
4. Preterite conjugation of radical changing verbs
Example: *Todos mis amigos venieron a la fiesta. Me devirtí mucho.**
5. Incorrect gender and use of definite and indefinite articles with nouns
Example: *Recibí la coche de mi padre**
6. Description of colour
Example: *una falda roja vs una falda de color rojo.*
7. Use of *haber* – past tense and pluralisation
Example: *En mi fiesta ayer hay mucha comida. Habían muchas personas**
8. Misuse of accents distorting meaning → especially the preterite tense

Example: *hablo, mama, que, como*

9. The use of *por* versus *para*
Example: *Había una fiesta por mi cumpleaños**
10. Inappropriate use of adjectives
Example: *la fiesta fue simpática*
11. Inappropriate pluralisation
Example: *las comidas, las gentes**
12. Placement of object pronouns
Example: *Mi mamá regaló me unos discos compactos. Mi abuela diome un regalo.**
13. *Me* vs *mi*
Example: *Mis padres mi dieron un regalo.**
14. Lack of punctuation

Vocabulary

1. Limited vocabulary as related to themes
2. Poor spelling
Example: *Fútbol* vs football
3. Very few scripts with correct use of the verb *sorprender* versus *una sorpresa*
Example: *Estaba sorpresa**
4. Describing overall look
Example: *Yo mire muy bien.* (*estar* could be used in this case)*

Good Points Noted

It was heartening to see scripts which included good use of adverbs – *especialmente, felizmente, desafortunadamente*. There was a wide variety of idiomatic expressions.

Estar sin blanca – to have no money / to be broke / to be down and out

Echar / tener / hacer una fiesta – to have a party

Chillar – to shout

Tener buena pinta / mala pinta - to look good / bad

De sol a sol – from dusk to dawn

En un dos por tres – in the twinkling of an eye

Me chifla / - I just love

The following is an example of an excellent letter.

Miércoles el 11 de enero de 2006.

Queridísima Maria:

¿Cómo estás? Gracias por tu carta. Estoy escribiendo para decirte de mi fiesta de cumpleaños reciente.

La fiesta comenzó a las seis de la tarde. En un abrir y cerrar de ojos, la casa se llenó de charlas y risas de parientes y amigos. Estaba muy sorprendida de ver a mi mejor amiga de la infancia, Carla. También, nuestro cantante favorito, Alejandro Sanz, quien fue invitado por mis padres, asistió a la fiesta.

A la fiesta, había mucha comida deliciosa por ejemplo el arroz con pollo, el gazpacho y mi plato favorito, la paella. Durante la fiesta, un helicóptero aterrizó en el patio y el piloto me entregó una guitarra que quería desde hacía mucho tiempo. ¡Qué sorpresa! También recibí las joyas, el dinero y una computadora.

Chica, fue un día inolvidable de veras. Bueno, saludos de mi parte a tu familia y escíbeme pronto.

*Cariñosamente,
Isabela.*

Section 3 – Contextual Announcement/ Contextual Dialogue

These items were tested for the first time this year and most candidates chose to do the announcement.

This section of Paper 02 requires candidates to choose either to write (i) a contextual announcement or (ii) a contextual dialogue completion. Cues given in English were provided for both options.

There was a wide range of responses for both questions, as candidates produced no answers, to limited answers, to very precise and well thought-out answers.

Contextual Announcement

Some candidates did not read the instructions carefully and this was evident in their omission of some of the cues; in particular the title of the announcement and the fact that the trip was going to another Caribbean Territory (Tobago, Jamaica) rather than a Spanish-speaking country. Some of the responses were very disjointed and hence lacked fluency and clarity of expression. This was primarily due to the omission of vocabulary, the misuse of prepositions (*viaje de Venezuela*), misspellings, a general lack of knowledge of words (*cinco cientos** for *quinientos*) and poor sentence structure. Also, candidates were quite insensitive to the language as they interchanged the use of the familiar and polite command forms and general subject and verb agreement. There was the improper use of tenses, in particular the preterite and future tenses in both the regular and irregular forms (the verb forms carried no accents and their spellings were poor).

Contextual Dialogue

Candidates made some poor attempts at answering this question because of a general lack of comprehension. In some instances, they wrote back either exactly or some parts of what the manager said for their responses, and therefore, the latter made no sense as they did not include any of the given cues.

There was the use of the *tú* form when addressing the manager instead of the polite form of *usted* and very simple expressions were poorly used.

From the outset, it was clear that some candidates lacked vocabulary. The word *plancha* was unknown and was, therefore substituted with *nevera, bicicleta, radio, televisión, appliance** and even sugar. *Regresar** and *volver** were used to replace *devolver* and *trabajar**, *andar** and *server** were used for *funcionar*.

There were also errors with word order whether it was a pronoun or an adjective. For example *La plancha es no trabajar**, *Mi mama viene a ver tu* or *mi mama no es idiota**, *leio las**; *Mi mama quiere una nuevo plancha**. From these latter examples, it can be said that these errors in subject and verb and noun and adjective agreement may not be only due to a lack of knowledge, but possibly poor spelling habits or simple carelessness.

There was the inappropriate use of the subjunctive (*Mi mamá quiere tu devolver ella dinero**) but this, as well as the use of idiomatic expressions, was mastered by the really good students. It was observed that although the Contextual Dialogue was attempted by most candidates, the majority of them performed better in the Contextual Announcement.

In some instances, candidates improvised by using English and French insertions, so that the meaning was still conveyed and their thoughts flowed freely. It must also be noted, that some candidates ignored given instructions since they answered both questions and presented the announcement like an advertisement or poster, aided by colourful drawings.

Quite a few candidates either did BOTH the announcement and dialogue, or they created their own dialogues. Also, many candidates interpreted the announcement as an advertisement and as such, many of them failed to make the minimum word limit because of how they chose to present their announcement. Candidates must be properly prepared using Spanish papers to do this question.

Common errors encountered:

1. Use of the past participle instead of the preterite.
2. Poor and often incorrect conjugation of the future tense – subject – verb agreement and irregular verbs
**Deciré* instead of *diré*
*Veniré**
*Saliremos**
3. Incorrect and sometimes non-existent punctuation.
4. Grave spelling errors.
5. Confusion of *por* and *para*, *ser* and *estar*
6. Indirect and direct object pronouns were badly used or in some cases such as subject pronouns.
7. Use of *porque* instead of *pero*
8. Absence of the personal “a”
9. Position and agreement of adjectives.

10. *Regresar* was often used instead of *devolver* (Dialogue)
11. *Interesante* replaced *interesado*
12. *Tener* instead of *Haber*
13. *Culpa* instead of *error*
14. Confusion of *De nada* and *Bienvenido* and a general misuse of *bienvenido*.
15. Familiar and polite address was misused or intermixed in the dialogue.
16. Inconsistency in use of the commands.
17. *Funcionar* was frequently – *no trabaja**
*No está trabajando**
as opposed to *No funciona/sirve*
18. The subjunctive was also poorly used on many occasions.
19. The literal expression *No problema* instead of *no hay problema*
20. *Poder* was poorly conjugated / used.
21. Incorrect format for writing dates and numbers in the hundreds / thousands.
22. Capital letters were used for days and months.

With reference to general vocabulary usage, a few common threads were evident.

1. Candidates did not know how to say “Spanish-speaking country” – hence expressions such as *un español hablando país**
2. They also did not know how to say “a trip” hence *el tripo** or *la tripa**.
3. *El clubo/clube** was often encountered as well as the placement of words, for example, *El español clube**
4. There was the confusion of *buena* and *bien* (dialogue)
5. In the dialogue quite a few candidates were not aware of what appliance was being referred to and as a result many of them placed their “own” appliances into the dialogue.
6. Candidates did not know their number vocabulary – especially with irregular hundreds – *cinco cientos**
*un mil**
7. “*Problema*” was made feminine
8. *Tener un buen tiempo** as opposed to *divertirse*
9. There was often *un viaje de** instead of *un viaje a*.
10. Confusion of *dejar* with *salir*

11. Misuse of *gusta/gustaría*
12. *Eso* instead of *que* (relative pronoun)
Yo diré a mi mama eso...
13. *La cuesta** was used instead of *el costo / precio*
14. *La cultura española* was badly used in relation to Spanish/Hispanic culture or culture of other countries.
15. Candidates also did not know how to say e-mail
16. *Llamar* – to call with phone numbers was not followed by “al” as it should have been.

Common Spelling errors encountered:

1. *Dólares / dolores*
2. *Atención*
3. *Señor*
4. *Professor / proffesor*
5. *Apprender*
6. *España*
7. *Columbia*
8. *Opportunidad*
9. *Asta*
10. *Quatro* and other numbers

Candidates frequently omitted accents – *Mamá, adiós, país*

11. *Hora* and *tiempo* was used instead of *vez*
12. *Uno oro*
13. *Mucho* and *muy* confused often.
14. The contractions *de + el* and *a + el* were not done.

The following is an example of an excellent response for the contextual announcement.

¡VAMOS A VENEZUELA!

¡El club de español te ofrece un viaje a Venezuela!

*Todo el mundo puede participar en el viaje
y cuesta solamente cinco mil dólares.*

*Saldremos el dos de julio y pasaremos una semana
en el país hermoso de Venezuela.*

*Ven y participa en el viaje y puede aprender la
cultura hispana, puede encontrar a gente nueva en
Venezuela y puede ir de compras.*

*Disfrutarás las playas bellas y los museos
interesantes.*

¡Reserva ya su plaza para el viaje!

*Para más información llama a 623-8253
o habla con la profesora de español.*

Section IV – Reading Comprehension

The performance in this section ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory. Many candidates demonstrated high levels of comprehension while there were some who had difficulty responding to some items and a few who never provided any responses at all. Some candidates even created their own story.

Questions 1, 4, 7 and 8 seemed to have been the most easily understood questions for the majority of the candidates. Question 2, though understood by some, proved difficult to others who did not know the meaning of *antipático* and gave renditions such as “antipatic” and “anticipate”. A lack of the necessary vocabulary was also observed for questions 5 and 6 where *saludó con la mano* was commonly rendered as *she saluted them* or *she raised her hand* and *no volvimos a verla* as *we didn’t return to see her*. *Triste* was translated as “thirsty”, *plumas* as “plums” and “pens” and *vestido* as “vest”, *rojo* was confused with *reloj* and some candidates said Teresita was wearing a watch.

The question which proved to be the most challenging for the majority of the candidates was question number 10. Many did not know the meaning of *pajarito* and gave meanings such as *parrot*, *pyjamas* and *parakeet*. Also, the verb *recordamos* was translated to be “records”.

Some candidates ignored instructions and answered questions in Spanish. Teachers need to remind candidates to read instructions carefully and let them know that responses in Spanish for this question are unacceptable.

The overall performance was satisfactory and can be improved in the future if teachers give candidates more practice in answering comprehension items, especially where they are required to make inferences. However, in this comprehension, candidates were not required to make inferences. The passage was quite literal yet some candidates tended to make inferences of number 7 and number 10. In the former, some responded that Don Sebastian responded harshly and was lying to the children and in number 10 some compared the personalities of Don Sebastian to Teresita. Also, candidates need to be exposed to as wide a variety of vocabulary as possible so that they would do very well in this section.

Paper 03 – Oral Examination

Responses to Situations

Performance on this section of the oral examination ranged from outstanding to very weak. There were some excellent candidates who provided fully appropriate responses since they understood the functions involved. The productions of the better prepared candidates were spontaneously presented and reflected mastery of the structures, knowledge of appropriate vocabulary including expressions peculiar to specific functions.

There were however, several weak candidates whose responses revealed that they had not acquired the strategies and techniques required to perform satisfactorily. They lacked the necessary vocabulary and grammar to express themselves, and also showed deficiencies in terms of their overall fluency and pronunciation. Many struggled to find appropriate vocabulary to express feelings, give directions, explanations or reasons and offer excuses.

While some responses were partially appropriate, candidates lost marks because of the several grammatical inaccuracies rendered. Areas of the grammar that seemed to be problematic include:

- the use of the polite and familiar commands
- subject - verb agreement
- inability to use the Preterite tense correctly
- incorrect use of the Present Subjunctive
- incorrect use of the *Ser* and *Estar*
- failure to make noun and adjective agreement
- inappropriate conjugation of verbs
- use of the infinitive instead of the conjugated verb
- incorrect placement of **no** in a negative statement

With regard to vocabulary, candidates frequently made up words, used French words (*regarder, premier, etage*) or used incorrect vocabulary - e.g. *regresar* instead of *devolver*.

Reading Aloud

Candidates' performance this section ranged from limited to outstanding with the majority falling in the "good" range. While many candidates showed adequate knowledge of the sound system, exhibiting correct pronunciation and stress, several candidates had problems in the areas of fluency and pronunciation. Candidates had problems with the "ge" and "gf" sounds, mispronouncing words like:

Argentina
geografia
ecologia
biologia
originaria

Also, many candidates encountered difficulties with the "ll", "h", and "j": sounds, as evidenced by the incorrect pronunciation of the following words:

ejemplo
humanidad
historico
paellera
polio

Many of the vowels proved quite daunting for some candidates, resulting in the poor delivery of such words as:

polenque
decimos
agradable
independiente

The perennial problem of anglicizing words which resembled English resurfaced. The English influence was dominant in the underlined sections of the following words.

cultura
populares
publicado
declarado
Universidad
internacionales
revolución
funcionan
Europa
especialidades
diferencias
adultos

In longer words, especially English cognates, syllables were collapsed and vowels were omitted. Some notable examples included:

interes (intres)
interesante (intresante)
prepararla (preprarla)
creatividad (criativdad)
artesanía (artensia)
pertenecen (pertencen)
variada (varidad)

Incorrect stress was noted most often in words such as:

selvas
ofrecen
canastas
ultimas
exquisita
pertenecen
incluyen
merecen
encuentran
reflejan

Guided Conversation

It seems that this section proved most challenging for many candidates. Some candidates understood all the questions asked, responded readily, used a wide range of vocabulary and handled the language fairly well with minimal errors.

The large majority however, had difficulty in comprehending a number of the questions on all sections. Many candidates lacked spontaneity for the most part, and frequently requested a repeat of the questions. Too many high frequency words were unknown - *viajar*, *extranjero*,

idioma. Many candidates did not understand "recreo", mejorarla, un lugar de interes, fuera de casa, juntos, un almacén, ventajas.

Due to the lack of comprehension of basic vocabulary, many candidates were unable to respond fluently or accurately to a number of the questions. Vocabulary was generally very sparse. Candidates tended to misinterpret basic interrogatives:

¿Quiénes son?

¿Cómo es?

¿En qué ocasiones ...?

The errors were numerous and included:

- incorrect noun /adjective /verb /article agreement
- (*yo estudia, la español, el libros, los montanas son hermoso*)
- incorrect verb structures (*me gusta leo/ comiendo, me gustaria visitaria/ visito, son muchas flores*)
- responding using same verb form of the question asked (*¿Que prefieres . . . ? - Yo prefieres . . .*)
- lack of comprehension, where candidates named items instead of describing.

Overall, marks were lost because of poor grammar, poor syntax and limited vocabulary. While candidates may have understood the questions and responded without much hesitation, there was very little attempt to elaborate or go beyond the rudimentary.

General Comments

Teachers need to use this report to guide them in their teaching. The same errors seem to be repeated year after year. Effort should be made to provide Oral Practice. Candidates should also be made to think of the functions of language especially for Section I. More practice is needed in Reading Comprehension.