

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

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

MAY/JUNE 2010

**SPANISH
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates' overall performance in the 2010 examination declined when compared with that of 2009. This decline was due mainly to the less than satisfactory execution of Section III, Contextual Announcement and Contextual Dialogue, and Section IV, Reading Comprehension, on Paper 02. Candidates clearly had difficulty in coming to grips with these two sections.

There was generally a wide barrier between the diligent, well-prepared candidates and the ones who clearly struggled. It is difficult to ascertain whether poor performance stemmed from lack of ability, lack of interest or lack of preparation. Cases where the performance was commendable in any way were encouraging.

However, even overall weak candidates showed some capacity for expressing themselves in writing with some capacity of recall of vocabulary, if not grammar. This indicates that all is not lost. It is recommended that teachers, in the first instance, explore activities that build recall, thereby enhancing students' self-confidence. Attention also has to be paid to the types of error correction being utilized in the classroom. Persistence of certain types of errors is an indication that lessons have to be re-designed constantly so as to re-introduce and re-enforce those linguistic elements that detract from potentially good performance.

Generally, students must also be made aware of examination strategies. For this examination, attempting a question is a better option than leaving a blank space. Planning a letter, counting words and matching answers with rubrics are basic requirements in writing an examination. Such fundamentals must not be taken for granted and teachers must provide guidance and practice to enable their students to master them.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper, which comprised two sections, tested candidates' ability to (i) listen to and understand a number of items in Spanish and (ii) read and understand a number of written items. The overall paper required that candidates master the essential grammatical structures and vocabulary within the syllabus. Performance on this paper improved slightly over last year's.

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, complying with the function which the situation demanded (such as expressing an opinion, providing information, making enquiries). Candidates were assessed on the appropriateness of their responses and the quality of language used.

Situation 1

A pen pal from Spain wishes to know what the weather is like in your country during the Christmas season. Respond to his/her e-mail. [Function: Describing weather]

Suggested response: *En diciembre hace fresco/buen tiempo.*

Candidates used *el tiempo* together with the verb *hace* and other weather expressions, offering responses like *el tiempo hace frío*. They also used *tiempo* for *la temporada* or *la estación de Navidad*. Often, the article *la* was left out before *Navidad*. The word *muy* was used instead of *mucho* in expressions like *hace *muy frío* and **el tiempo es muy calor*.

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

Situation 2

Patricia has sent you an e-mail asking about your plans for the weekend. Respond to her e-mail. [Function: Expressing intention]

Suggested response: *Iré a...*

Candidates experienced difficulty forming the simple future using *ir a + infinitive*. The preposition *a* was often omitted. In cases where candidates expressed plans to visit someone, the personal *a* was often left out. Candidates were unable to come up with the correct expression for weekend — *fin de* la semana* was often utilized, and *en* was used instead of *el* before the days of the week.

Situation 3

Your friend has sent you an e-mail suggesting that you both participate in an activity on the weekend. Respond, indicating an alternative as your preference.

[Function: Expressing preference]

Suggested response: *Prefiero + infinitive/Sería mejor+infinitive*

The interpretation of this situation seemed to be the main problem. Candidates did not understand what was meant by “an alternative as your preference”, so many stated an activity and did not include the element of preference. Those who did understand the question frequently spelt *prefiero* incorrectly.

Situation 4

Send an e-mail to a friend telling him/her of one of the school rules that you do not like.

[Function: Expressing dislike]

Suggested response: *No me gusta ser puntual/ detesto llevar uniforme/no me gusta que estén prohibidos los teléfonos celulares.*

Some candidates did not recognize that they had to do two things — express dislike as well as state the rule. Here the structures with *gustar* were problematic. With respect to stating the rules, candidates failed to use *no* before an infinitive and *ningún(a)* before nouns. The present participle was frequently used instead of the infinitive in expressions such as **no comiendo en la clase*.

Candidates also neglected to use the subjunctive in structures which required it. The vocabulary for “rule” also posed difficulties, with some candidates spelling *regalo* for *regla*. In addition, candidates showed an inability to use *prohibido/se prohíbe/no se permite* followed by the infinitive. Candidates also could not differentiate between the use of *en* for “at a place” and *a* (movement towards), so “at school” was frequently expressed as **a la escuela* instead of *en la escuela*.

Situation 5

You are trying to entice your cousins abroad to come to your country for a holiday. Mention one positive characteristic of the people of your country that you include in a letter to them.

[Function: Describing people]

Suggested response: *La gente es muy amable/ los...son+adjective*

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

This situation was well understood by the majority of candidates, although some decided to describe the place rather than the people. The following were the main challenges faced by candidates:

- i. the spelling of *gente* (*jente*)
- ii. the pluralization of *gente*
- iii. the use of *son* with *gente*
- iv. the erroneous use of **persona* to denote “the people”
- v. noun/adjective agreement and placement. The adjectives used were frequently misspelt (**sympathetic*, **interestante*, **intelligente*)

Situation 6

You are having a meeting with the Students' Council to discuss plans for the Graduation Ball. Write one suggestion you would like to make at the meeting. [Function: Suggesting]

Suggested response: *Me gustaría-/ ¿Por qué no....?*

Most candidates did not make appropriate use of the structures for making suggestions. Many failed to make use of the conditional or future tenses, and of those who used the structure *sugiero que...*, many did not use the subjunctive mood. Some good suggestions made by candidates included *sugiero que tengamos mucha comida*, *recomiendo que vayamos al hotel*.

Situation 7

You thought you had done very well on an exam but, in fact, you failed. Write the note you send to your teacher querying your grade. [Function: Questioning/Inquiring]

Suggested response: *¿Por qué saqué esa nota? /¿Está seguro(a) que no se equivocó?*

Many candidates did not interpret the situation correctly and did not query their grade. Instead, they translated the situation or made statements about the grade, expressing their disbelief, disappointment or the fact that they passed the exam. The main challenge here was the word for “grade”, frequently translated as **grado*. Candidates also failed to use the *usted* form to address the teacher and were unable to produce *revisar*, using *mirar* instead. The term *examen* was frequently misspelt (**examin/examines*) and the expression **otro tiempo más* was used instead of *una vez más*.

Situation 8

Someone has stolen an item from you. Send an e-mail to your friend telling him/her about the incident. [Function: Reporting]

Suggested response: *Estaba caminando cuando me robaron.*

For this item, some candidates attempted to relate the actual incident when the article was stolen while others merely mentioned that an article was lost or missing. Many candidates did not know *robar* and instead used *tomar*, *tocar*, *sacar*, *tener*.

When the preterite tense was used, many times accents were missing. The use of *alguien* was sometimes confused with *algun*, and *salir* was used instead of *dejar* in responses like **salí mi libro en la mesa*.

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Situation 9

You are very happy today. Send an e-mail to your friend stating the reason.

[Function: Expressing happiness with reason]

Suggested response: *Estoy muy contento/a porque+verb in the appropriate tense.*

Most candidates attempted to deal with both elements of the situation. Also, many expressed the reason without the expression of happiness. Some candidates stated the opposite — sadness or anger and a reason. Here the vocabulary for “happy” posed a difficulty and the use of *soy* instead of *estoy* was evident. For example, **soy muy contento porque gano un carro*. Quite often, *porque* was separated into two words, while when *por qué* was required, it was rendered as *porque*.

Situation 10

Send an e-mail to a friend telling him/her something interesting you overheard at Linda’s birthday party last night. [Function: Providing information]

Suggested response: Any information, for example, *Mauricio tiene una novia*.

This question provided a wide variety of responses. Candidates heard some extremely interesting bits of information but need to be cautioned about the element of decency, as some of the responses were quite crude. The main challenges here were how to express *en la fiesta de cumpleaños de Linda*. Among the many errors made by candidates were

- (i) the use of the apostrophe, *Linda’s*
- (ii) the absence of *de* to indicate possession
- (iii) the misspelling of *cumpleaños*
- (iv) the use of *a* instead of *en* with *la fiesta*
- (v) the frequent misuse of *oí* which was rendered as *oyó, oyí, oído, oye*
- (vi) the omission of *que* or the use of *eso, ese, este* instead of the relative pronoun.

Other errors made which need to be addressed include:

- (vii) *a+el*
- (viii) gender of nouns like *cine (a la cine)*
- (ix) pluralization of *la ropa*
- (x) the erroneous use of the present participle and the awkward use of the present continuous tense to express the future
- (xi) the inability to say “to go shopping” — rendered as *comprar, ir a compras*
- (xii) the need to use *e* for *y*
- (xiii) spelling errors *an* for *han*, *haser* for *hacer*, *iva* for *iba*
- (xiv) accents: candidates omitted accents when necessary and included accents where they were not necessary
- (xv) the use of *mal* instead of *malo/mala* and *bien* for *bueno/a*
- (xvi) the use of *llegar* for *llevar*, *conocer* for *saber*, *devolver* for *volver/regresar*.

General Comments and Recommendations

While candidates may score marks for attempting to communicate, they need to read the situations more carefully, identify the function that is to be treated and deal with their responses in a precise manner. The importance of paying attention to the quality of language, (vocabulary and grammar) must be emphasised.

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Section II – Letter/Composition

This section tested candidates' ability to produce a piece of Spanish (a letter or a composition) of about 130 – 150 words based on an outline given in English.

The requirements of this question fell well within the expected range of candidates at this level. Performance ranged, as in past years, from excellent to minimal with many candidates within the good to moderate category. More effort was made to attempt the question. There were fewer scripts than in previous years with no attempt made to respond to the question. There was somewhat of a preference for the letter over the composition but both questions were popular in choice, indicating that the candidates could relate easily to the topics.

Word Length

The majority of candidates complied with the required word limit. Some weaker candidates with limited vocabulary produced very short responses. The short responses of a few more competent candidates addressed the cues using very good language but failed to develop the points.

The excellent candidates who have a feel for the language must be cautioned to avoid writing short stories and to adhere to the required length of the composition or letter. Otherwise, they will lose valuable marks.

Date and Salutations

Many candidates seemed to be unaware of the format of the date for the letter, opting to write the numbers in words instead of figures. A few left out the date entirely. Many spelt the month with a capital letter.

Many candidates used appropriate salutations with fairly good use of the subjunctive. The introductions and endings which were memorized were well presented. However, there were still too many grammatical errors. Some of the errors that were frequently made included:

- *¿Como estas tu y tu familia?
- *Espero te encuentres bien
- *¿Como es tu familia?
- Incorrect spelling of “Querido”.

The ending of the letter was, for the most part, appropriate. Nonetheless, some spelling and grammar errors were made in a few cases, for example,

- *Besos y brazos
- *Su amiga

Strengths

Vocabulary

The more competent candidates produced well organized, developed ideas and wrote fluently. Even some weaker candidates presented good ideas with appropriate vocabulary but were limited by poor grammar. Some candidates made a concerted effort to learn and use idioms.

The excellent scripts exhibited a mastery of the required vocabulary, often using words which added flavour to the response. For example, “*papilla*”, “*foco*”, “*chasco*”. Candidates who were prepared for the topic of a natural disaster performed quite well making use of appropriate vocabulary and structures. For example, *Hicimos muchos preparativos para prepararnos: compramos agua purificada, linternas, pilas y comida enlatada.*

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Grammar

Many candidates mastered the use of the future tense of regular verbs. Candidates also demonstrated knowledge of the irregular preterite tense. In addition, the subjunctive was sometimes used correctly after the verb “to hope”, for example, *Espero que se recupere*.

Spelling

Candidates with a good command of the written language used appropriate spelling.

Use of Cues

Candidates generally respected the cues given which helped to keep them focused on the content of the response.

Weaknesses

Vocabulary

The following errors of vocabulary were made:

- *mirar* was used instead of *ver*
- *estudies* was used for *estudios*
- *revolver* was used for *volver*
- *grado* was used for *nota*
- *universitario* was used for *universidad*
- *sorpresado* was used for *sorprendido*
- *tener* was used for *haber*
- *bienvenida* was used for *dar la bienvenida*
- The Spanish word for “storm” was often unknown
- *a* was used instead of *en* to indicate at a place
- *salir* was used for *dejar*
- *llegar* was often followed by *en*

Grammar

This area is cause for concern. The following grammatical errors were most evident:

- Spelling of irregular preterite — *dijieron, fueron*
- “*fue*” for “*fui*”
- Agreement of adjectives — *mis amigos estan feliz*
- Verb agreement — *Mi familia estaban/Mis amigos y yo están...*
- The use of the indefinite article after *ser* with professions
- Omission of *a* after *asistir*
- The lack of subjunctive after *cuando* with future — *Cuando regreso en mayo*
- *Pagar para*
- Incorrect positioning of object pronouns
- *Ustedes* used for “they”
- Incorrect use of tenses. The present tense was often used to express the friends’ reaction to the return home.
- Use of capital letters for subjects and months.
- Incorrect use of comparative — *mas bien* for *mejor*
- Failure to use personal *a*
- Incorrect use of *ser* and *estar* — *Mi mama es en el hospital/ soy triste.*
- Incorrect use of *conocer* and *saber*

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- *Por* versus *para*
- Use of *gustar* — *Me gusta el inglés y el arte.*
- *Continuar* followed by the infinitive rather than the gerund
- Incorrect use of *habían* — *Habían muchas casas destruidas*
- Lack of subjunctive — *Mi mamá quiere que yo voy.*

Spelling

- Improper use of accents especially in the scripts of more competent candidates who are accustomed to speaking or hearing the language. More emphasis needs to be paid to correct spelling.
- Omission of the letter “h” — *abía, ubo*
- Use of ‘s’ instead of “c” — *haser*
- Use of “v” for “b” — “*estava*”
- Use of double letters, *comunidades, profesor*

Use of Cues

- The word ‘indefinitely’ was misinterpreted. Some students returned home because of an event.
- Some excellent responses did not address all the cues at the cut off point because they were far too long.

Recommendations

- Constant practice is one of the keys to success. Students need to be introduced to this type of question as early as possible so that they have enough time for adequate and constant revision.
- Daily practice in writing the date and using figures will avoid the errors made in this aspect of the letter. Practice in the use of various salutations and endings is also recommended.
- Students need to be trained in reading the instructions and the questions thoroughly and carefully in order to ensure that the rubric and cues are followed precisely. They must adhere to the word limit.
- Points need to be adequately developed. Students can be guided towards writing a paragraph per cue wherever possible.
- The learning and constant use of idiomatic expressions will greatly enhance the style of the responses.
- Adequate practice in penmanship is recommended. Sometimes a simple change of the writing instrument will improve handwriting.
- Students must be encouraged to write in blue or black ink and not in pencil.
- Many weaknesses in grammar are still evident in responses. Students need to do exercises or other suitable activities which would lead to the learning and practice of grammar.
- Students must be reminded to double check their work in order to avoid careless errors in spelling, grammar and vocabulary.
- Teachers should practise team teaching to enhance their own exposure and learning. Authentic encounters with the target are strongly encouraged for teachers.

Section III – Contextual Announcement/Contextual Dialogue

This section required candidates to choose to complete either (i) a contextual announcement or (ii) a contextual dialogue. Cues were given in English for both options and candidates had to use between 80 and 100 words to complete their responses.

Both the contextual dialogue and the contextual announcement had similar levels of difficulty. The contextual announcement allowed them the freedom of expression whereas the contextual dialogue guided them to utilize certain vocabulary structures. Once again, the lack of accentuation or its overuse, the lack of punctuation marks and a lack of basic vocabulary structures and improper use of the language, continue to hinder candidates’ performance.

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Contextual Announcement

Candidates who selected the contextual announcement were quite creative in their responses and at times presented it in the format of an advertisement or with incomplete sentences. Many candidates failed to recognize that a command was required and when they did, they failed to use the appropriate polite/familiar or singular/plural forms. The verb *tener* was often used instead of *haber* to form the perfect tense and there was a failure to recognize *encontrar* as a stem-changing verb. There was an omission of the subjunctive mood and many candidates simply used an anglicized version of what they wanted to say. For example, **Quiero tu ayudar mi* to mean I want you to help me or *Espero que *encontras mi perro* for “I hope that you find my dog”. Additionally, many errors were noted where candidates substituted subject pronouns (*ella* and *él*) for the possessive adjective (*su*) and wrote *el/la color* for *su color*. French words and accents were also included.

Although the question did not specify the type of pet that was lost, the majority of the scripts were written on the lost dog. However, it was unfortunate that **pero* was used very often instead of *perro*. Furthermore, candidates handled the cue “details of its disappearance” very poorly. There were several other instances of spelling errors including the failure to use accents or the tendency to use them haphazardly. It must be noted that several candidates used **cinco cientos* instead of *quinientos*, **un mil* rather than *mil*, **dollars/dinero* rather than *dólares*, **viente* instead of *veinte*, **attencion* instead of *atención*, or **un ciento* rather than *ciento*, in their announcements. Candidates also neglected to use *a* after the verb *ayudar*, or misused *ser* and *estar* — *mi perro no *es aqui*. Candidates continued to have difficulty with the preterite and imperfect tenses and the use of *gustar* — **mi pero gusta*. They also misused adjectives — **pequena orejas* or **azules pantalones*.

Other examples of errors in the use of the language are as follows:

- *parche* for *mancha*
- *encantar* for *buscar* and vice versa
- *hora* for *vez*
- *ahora* for *hora*
- *mirar* for *busca*
- *buscar* for *por/para*
- *faltar* for *perder*
- *devolver* for *volver* and vice versa
- *manos* for *patas/pies*
- *dos cien* for *doscientos*
- *asistir* for *ayudar*
- *perder* for *pedir*
- *oyos* for *ojos*
- *ir y* instead of *ir a* + infinitive
- *la veia pasado* for *ha sido ultimo visto*

Many candidates exhibited a lack of basic vocabulary. They did not know the Spanish words for “missing”, “reward”, “pet”, “lost”, or for different types of animals. However, the better candidates manifested fewer errors and there were scripts where the use of relevant idiomatic expressions was evident as well as a sound knowledge of grammatical structures. Some of these are as follows:

- *en un abrir y cerrar de los ojos*
- *orejas lanudas*
- *alejarse de*
- *darse cuenta de*
- *tener miedo*
- *echar de menos*

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Contextual Dialogue

Candidates were unable to respond appropriately to some cues and this affected the flow of the entire dialogue in most instances resulting in inappropriate responses. Many of them failed to mention their place of employment (for the second response) and this affected the response in the third cue. The question, *Qué clase de trabajo...?* was interpreted for a classroom (*clase*) situation, to which candidates listed subjects which they studied. The question, *Y es verdad lo que dice?* was often not understood, candidates simply rewrote the question as their answers.

It must also be noted that agreement of adjectives was often inaccurate as there were several masculine forms given even though the interviewee, Adriana, was female. Not many candidates made use of idiomatic expressions and the spelling errors were numerous. Many errors also occurred with the conjugation of verbs as several candidates failed to change the subject of the verb in their responses. For example, *Como espera beneficiarse...?* was answered by *Espera beneficiarse...*

There were also instances of misspellings (*intelligente, proffessor*), the incorrect use of *mucho gusto* and the wrong tenses being used in the responses given. Other errors included *gracias para, gracias por teniendo, me llamo es, estoy dieciocho anos, soy veinte anos, e inteligente, estoy interesante en, pagar por mi, me gusta cantando, estoy contento ser aquí* and *yo amor música*. Some examples of errors in the use of the language (tense, verb, syntax, agreement) are as follows:

- *encantar* for *conocer*
- *demasiado* for *también*
- *amar* and *querer* for *gustar* and *encantar*
- *cantanto* for *yo canto*
- the misuse of *hacer* + time
- *atender* for *asistir*
- *numero/nombre* for *número*
- *no problema* for *no hay problema*
- *mi gusto* for *me gusta*
- *bienvenido* for *de nada*
- *interes* for *interesante*
- *soy muy feliz persona*
- *me gustan leer y cantar*
- *espero que yo pueda ganar*
- *puedo cantar* instead of *se cantar*
- misuse of *a* — *trabajo al hospital*

Nevertheless, some candidates produced excellent responses and were able to express themselves in such a manner that demonstrated a sound knowledge of the language. Examples of some of these phrases included:

- *más adelante realizar mi sueño*
- *me siento capaz de ganar este...*
- *en poder darme la oportunidad de...*
- *desde niña mi sueño era ser...*
- *cada oveja con su pareja*

Recommendations

- Dialogues should be practised from as early as Form 1.
- Dialogue completions can be done as group activities.
- The passive voice, future tense and the past participle may be useful tools for the contextual announcement.
- Posting announcements in Spanish around the school should be encouraged.

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Section IV — Reading Comprehension

In this section, candidates were required to read a passage in Spanish and respond in English to ten questions set on the passage. The marks allocated ranged from one to three based on the demands of the question.

Most candidates did not handle this section well. Although there were those who did well by scoring 15 and over, others scored well below 10. Teachers should be concerned with this since it indicates that many of their charges are lacking in basic comprehension skills.

Vocabulary

Teachers' attention is drawn once more to building vocabulary. Students are being exposed to a wealth of vocabulary via the Internet, cable television and advertisements. Not all of these words, be they in Spanish or English, would be acceptable in meaning or spelling. Teachers need to make themselves aware of what the students are being exposed to, and take steps to ensure that they, the students, are learning and can produce what is acceptable under examination circumstances. For example, via cable television, candidates hear *marca* being used for "label". Though some candidates recognized *etiqueta* in the passage as "label", most did not, and used words such as "brand", "package", "box top", "etiquette", "tag" and "sticker". Although *red* is a synonym in Spanish for *Internet* (borrowed from English), it was not recognized by many candidates who translated it as "in the red", and "cookbook on the wall". *Torta* is another word that posed difficulties, with candidates writing that Manuel baked a pie/tart/tortilla/bread/hamburger.

These are just some examples of items of vocabulary which candidates did not know and which impeded comprehension.

Grammar

Grammar did not present a great problem this year except for the fact that once again, candidates seemed to have forgotten that prepositions in Spanish tend to have more than one meaning, depending on the context in which they are used. For example,

- (i) *enterré la etiqueta en la torta* where *en* was taken as "on" rather than "in".
- (ii) *quise jugarle una broma a mi hermano* where *a* was taken as "to"/"with" rather than "on".

Below are the questions asked and the suggested responses.

1. What did Manuel feel like doing on Saturday afternoon?
Suggested response: He wanted to surprise his girlfriend.
The majority of candidates responded correctly.
2. What did he want to do for Patricia?
Suggested response: He wanted to bake her a cake/an orange cake.
Again, the majority of candidates responded correctly.
3. How did he find help?
Suggested response: He found the recipe on the Internet.
Many candidates received only partial marks because they did not recognize *red*.
4. What did his brother want to do?
Suggested response: Manuel's brother wanted to play a trick on him.
Many candidates obtained full marks, but there were those candidates who encountered difficulty with "*broma*" and therefore responded incorrectly. (Manuel's brother wanted to play with a broom.)

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5. What did his brother do?
Suggested response: His brother inserted the label of a *Chefmágico* cake mix in the cake.
Few candidates scored full marks. Most candidates scored one or two marks, depending on the relevant details presented in their responses.
6. What were Manuel and Patricia doing when Manuel's brother returned home?
Suggested response: Manuel and Patricia were having a conversation.
Most candidates responded correctly. Where responses were too distorted, no marks were awarded.
(Manuel and Patricia were conversating = 0 mark)
7. What did he ask Manuel and Patricia?
Suggested response: He asked if they had found the *Chefmágico* label in the cake.
While some candidates had all the elements required to score full marks, many candidates obtained one or two marks, and the candidates who responded by quoting the question directly from the passage scored no mark.
8. What did Manuel's brother assure Patricia about?
Suggested response: He assured her that Manuel had baked the cake.
Many candidates obtained full marks. Where responses were ambiguous (He assured her that he had baked the cake), candidates were partially rewarded.
9. Why was Manuel NOT annoyed with his brother?
Suggested response: Because it was not his brother's fault that the cake did not turn out well.
Very few candidates were able to provide sufficient details to obtain full marks on this question.
10. Why did Patricia believe that Manuel had baked the cake?
Suggested response: Because he used salt instead of sugar.
Most of the candidates offered a partially correct response: "That *Chefmágico* uses sugar in all their cakes". These candidates failed to make the link with what Manuel had done.

Recommendations

The techniques of reading comprehension are important, not only for the development of the other skills in Spanish, but in their application across the curriculum. Teachers, in practising/developing comprehension skills can help candidates to (i) focus on the cues to be obtained from the title and in the phrasing of the questions (ii) understand that often answers are obtained from the beginning of the passage to the end. For example, it is highly unlikely that the answer to question 4 will precede the answer to question 2.

Candidates should be encouraged to **read**. As pressed for time as teachers may be to complete the syllabus, carving out time for reading is imperative, as it can only aid **all** other areas of the Spanish language acquisition.

Paper 03 – Oral Examination

This paper tested candidates' ability to (i) produce appropriate responses in Spanish to a number of situations (ii) read aloud a short passage in Spanish and (iii) respond in Spanish to general questions based on four out of six topics indicated in the syllabus.

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Section I

Responses to Situations/Instructions

Candidates were given five situations, described in English, to which they were required to produce an appropriate response, in keeping with the function which the situation demanded. Performance on this section revealed a range of abilities among the candidates. Several of them attempted all the situations and were forthcoming with commendable and appropriate responses, demonstrating creativity and a satisfactory level of proficiency in communicating orally in Spanish. The better candidates seemed well prepared for the examination and handled all the situations competently. Their responses were appropriate and in most cases, presented with no undue hesitation. Such responses also reflected satisfactory control of structures and knowledge of a good range of vocabulary and idioms.

In the case of the weaker candidates, their performance was hampered by limited vocabulary, poor comprehension of the situation described and an inability to manipulate the language correctly. These candidates were less competent, less spontaneous and less precise in their attempt to respond appropriately. On numerous occasions, the very weak candidates either failed to respond or only responded to a part of the situation. In some instances, it was apparent that candidates had difficulty understanding the rubrics indicated in the situation. It was observed that candidates with vocabulary deficiencies in English invariably had trouble in understanding the situations. These candidates were challenged by expressions and words such as “to recruit”, “to reprimand”, “curfew”.

Many candidates had difficulty performing the following functions: “Expressing emotions”, “Refusing/Declining”, “Warning”, “Explaining”, “Expressing opinions”, “Making inquiries”, “Giving instructions”. Consequently, they did not address the requirements of the situation.

In some cases where marks were awarded for appropriateness, candidates failed to obtain marks for accuracy of expression. The sentences which they attempted to construct were fraught with grammatical errors including the following:

- The infinitive was used where a conjugated verb was required (*yo ayudar...*, *yo jugar...*, *la gente comprar*)
- Failure to use the infinitive after a conjugated verb (*puedo tengo...*, *quiero limpio...*, *me gusta voy...*, *puedes vas...*)
- Incorrect use of *gustar* (*yo gusto...*, *mi mamá no le gusta...*, *nos gustamos leer*, *mi familia se gusta...*)
- Omission of verbs, prepositions (*yo bien con mis estudios*, *salgo siete de la noche*, *mi mamá generosa*, *amable*)
- Incorrect expression of the negative (*hay no autobus*)
- Failure to observe the use of simple expressions with *tener* (*estoy miedo*, *soy sueño*, *soy hambre*, *es dieciocho años*)
- Incorrect use of tenses appropriate to the situation
- Confusion with *ser* and *estar* (*yo soy muy disappointadamente*, *era ocupado*, *era enferma*,
- Difficulty with *por* and *para*, *son las* and *a las*.

Vocabulary errors included

salir for *dejar*
regresar for *devolver*
mirar for *parecerse a*
asistir for *ayudar*

It was surprising to note that many candidates had difficulty with very basic vocabulary items like *dinero*, *película*, *regalo*, *interesante*.

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

Teachers are encouraged to consult the syllabus and expose students to the range of functions outlined therein. Practice in situational responses is recommended from very early in the teaching/learning process, so that students would be better equipped to handle this section of the examination.

Section II

Reading Passage

Candidates were required to read a passage in Spanish (125 – 130 words), demonstrating in the process, knowledge of pronunciation of discrete sounds, correct intonation and general fluency.

Performance on this section ranged from very good to poor. The stronger candidates understood the passages, had a good idea of the sound system, showed familiarity with the rule of accentuation and stress, and therefore performed well. In some centres, however, performance was described as extremely mediocre with candidates not having a clue as to what the passages were about, thus producing very disjointed reading. Some candidates adopted a predictable pattern of reading three to four words in cluster, ignoring punctuation and the obvious groupings such as nouns and verbs, or verbs and adjectives, clearly implying that they did not comprehend what was being read.

The reading was punctuated with mispronunciation. The inability to handle the Spanish “g” was conspicuous, no matter where it was placed. The following words were constantly mispronounced:

estrategias, surgió, orígenes, auge, originario, dirigir, exigencia.

Many candidates had problems distinguishing between the vowel sounds “e” and “i” and in rendering correctly the vowel diphthongs in words like *auge, ajiaco, ciudadano*. There was also the perennial anglicizing of words which bore any resemblance to English. Examples include *cultiva, social, radio, tension, negro, identidad, hipertension, dieta, china, base*. Further to this, there was constant interference of English when candidates attempted to produce the “u” sound in words like *cubana, cultura, comunidad, inculca, estimula, continuamente*.

Stress was placed randomly on many of the multisyllabic words and even when accents were used on specialist words, candidates failed to pronounce them correctly. The multisyllabic words were almost always severely mispronounced with candidates omitting one or more syllables in their utterances.

Words that were particularly difficult for many candidates include *personaje, pequeñuelos, ajiaco, árabe, pesqueras, cómicas, guerra, homenaje, indudablemente, difundido, aprendizaje, enseñanza*.

The Spanish “h” was not duly recognized in words like *hada, alcohol, almohada*.

Further examples of candidates' errors are listed below:

origuinario for *originario*
mezcala for *mezcla*
serguio for *surgió*
ateques for *ataques*
canautor for *cantautor*
concios for *consejos*
dairia for *diaria*
seguyendo for *siguiendo*
trayas/tieras for *tiras*
hieramenta for *herramienta*
proyictos for *proyectos*
guyaba for *guayaba*
aceptización for *aceptación*
inglesa for *iglesia*
bale for *baile*
enería/energergia for *energía*
promuve for *promueve*
aidentida for *identidad*
extrantajero for *extranjero*
anomidad for *anonimidad*
meriscos for *mariscos*
coquina for *cocina*
suentan for *cuentan*
diriguir for *dirigir*
surguió for *surgió*

Again, the recommendation is to expose students to extensive practice in reading aloud. Emphasis should be placed on the importance of correct pronunciation of all sounds, especially those that are different/do not exist in their native language. Teachers should create opportunities that allow students to listen to authentic Spanish in an effort to reduce the deficiencies observed in pronunciation and intonation. The importance of teachers' use of the target language in the classroom cannot be overstated, as well as teachers' immersion in the target language to enable such use.

Section III

Guided Conversation

In this section, candidates were required to engage in conversation on four topics. The topics presented this year were *Home and Family*, *Daily Routine*, *School and Career* and *Sports and Recreation*. Candidates were asked four questions on each of the topics and were assessed on comprehension and spontaneity, fluency and expression.

While performance was generally satisfactory, this section of the examination continues to be the most challenging for the majority of candidates. Some questions were handled competently, with candidates responding spontaneously, providing sufficient details that lent depth to their responses, thus allowing them to score maximum marks.

In many cases, candidates misunderstood the questions asked or kept the responses very minimal. On several occasions, responses were inappropriate and irrelevant. Very often, candidates requested repetition of the question or were quick to respond once they heard a familiar word or expression, without paying attention to what the question was asking or the interrogative word. Many of the questions which inquired about others were personalized, with candidates responding from their experience.

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

Candidates' performance was further hindered by a limited range of vocabulary and lack of mastery of basic elements of grammar. This clearly affected their fluency and quality of response. They lacked the vocabulary for high frequency words like *deporte, regla, carrera, oficio, tiempo libre*.

Candidates' flaws in grammar include the following:

- Incorrect conjugation of verbs or failure to conjugate verbs
- Failure to make noun and adjective agreement
- Incorrect position of adjectives
- Incorrect use of possessive adjectives
- Incorrect use of *gustar*

Candidates made many errors in constructing sentences, especially when they attempted to respond in a complete sentence. For example, *los ingredientes necesitas son es...*

mi escuela recomendación es bueno

mi familia actividades favoritas ir a la playa

no frecuencia visita sus abuelos.

Specific questions in the four topic areas which posed tremendous difficulties to many candidates were:

Home and Family

¿Qué tienes en común con esta persona?

Menciona una regla familiar que no te guste obedecer.

Limited vocabulary was obvious when candidates communicated their difficulty with *en común, regla, obedecer*.

Daily Routine

¿Con qué te desayunas todos los días?

Far too many candidates offered an inappropriate response like *solo, a las siete, con mi mamá y mi papá*.

¿Cómo ayuda tu papá en la cocina?

Some candidates said how they help or what the father does around the house and not in the kitchen.

¿Cuál sería tu rutina ideal?

Many candidates chose to elaborate on their daily routine — *me levanto..., me cepillo los dientes...etc.*

School and Career

¿Cómo son los monitores de tu escuela?

¿Cuál es la regla menos popular...?

¿Qué instalaciones tiene tu escuela?

¿Qué instalaciones tiene tu escuela?

¿Qué carrera quieres seguir...?

The main difficulty here was related vocabulary. Candidates were not familiar with the words *monitores, regla, instalaciones, carrera*.

Sports and Recreation

¿Cuál es el deporte favorito de tu país?

This question was frequently misinterpreted, with candidates responding *no tengo un deporte favorito, me encanta el fútbol, mi deporte favorito es...*

Some candidates mentioned a sportsperson.

¿Qué espectáculos públicos te gustan?

Very few candidates understood this question. *Espectáculos* was a difficult vocabulary item for many.

¿Cómo pasa la gente un día de fiesta en tu país?

This question was rarely handled competently; vocabulary and comprehension were the major setbacks.

The observation is that too many candidates are still experiencing difficulty in responding to questions on topics with which, at this level, they should be comfortable.

Recommendations

There is an obvious need for students to be more involved in the Spanish language, to interact more with native speakers in the community, to engage in discussions in Spanish within and outside of the classroom setting. Teachers should, as much as possible, conduct classes in Spanish and give instructions or explanations in the target language. Extensive use of Spanish in the classroom will not only strengthen students' listening and speaking skills, but will also increase their confidence when communicating in Spanish.

In preparing candidates for the oral exams, they should be reminded that they should listen carefully to the entire question before offering a response.