

Examiners' Report
June 2012

GCE Spanish 6SP02 01

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Introduction

This paper tests candidates' ability to understand both the spoken and written word and to express ideas and information in written Spanish. There are four listening tasks, one of which involves writing in Spanish, three reading tasks, of which one requires answers in English and another, answers in Spanish. There is also an essay question.

Examiners were pleased to read so many papers where candidates had identified correct comprehension answers and so many essays of a high quality.

Question 1

Question 1 was a listening task about the future of the computer where candidates had to complete summary sentences from a selection of possibilities. An average score of 3 out of 4 was awarded for this question.

Question 2

Question 2 was a listening text about the effect of smoking on asthmatics. Candidates had to select 4 true statements from 8 possibilities and over half the candidates scored full marks here.

Question 3 (a)

In Question 3, candidates had to fill a gap with an appropriate word from a bank of possibilities, in order to summarise a listening text on studying at home. The vast majority of candidates scored full marks on this question.

Question 4

This is the last and most challenging of the listening questions and was based on an interview with the lead singer of a rock band. Q4(a) was mostly handled well, although it was harder for candidates to describe who Pedro was than Raúl. The most common mistake was to lift the first person "coincidimos". Q4(c), was not answered correctly by many candidates, as most chose to lift or paraphrase "los reservan para escuchar en casa". This did not respond to the notion of "¿qué importancia tienen?". Q4(e) and Q4(f) caused problems for many candidates also, as only the strongest candidates correctly identified that laptops are the only technology that interests the band and also that the song represents their spirit or ideology. Many different spellings of "espíritu" were noted.

First person verbs must be avoided. As the spoken material is in the form of an interview, there will always be a number of verbs used in the first person. The questions will be in the third person and therefore the language of the response must be in the 3rd person in order to score.

Texto 4 – 'La Fuga'
listen to the interview with Nando (lead guitarist) of the group 'La Fuga'?

4 Escucha esta entrevista con Nando, guitarrista del grupo de rock, 'La Fuga'. Contesta las siguientes preguntas **en español**:

(a) ¿Quiénes son Pedro y Raúl? Da **dos** ideas. (2)

(i) A Pedro lo conocemos concierto donde coincidimos



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Examiner Comments

In this example, the first person plural (we) form of the verbs has been used and therefore this answer cannot be rewarded.

Texto 4 – 'La Fuga'

4 Escucha esta entrevista con Nando, guitarrista del grupo de rock, 'La Fuga'. Contesta las siguientes preguntas **en español**:

(a) ¿Quiénes son Pedro y Raúl? Da **dos** ideas. (2)

(i) Nando conocí a Pedro en un concierto donde coincidieron.



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Examiner Comments

In comparison with the previous example, this candidate has also used a first person verb, but in this case, s/he has also put the subject 'Nando' in front of it. This answer is acceptable because it is clear to whom the answer refers because there is a subject with the verb.



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Examiner Tip

Practise changing first persons to thirds in all tenses.

It is essential to understand what is required by the question. A 'lift' from the text will sometimes work, but only if it gives the information required.

(c) ¿Qué importancia tienen los discos de otros músicos?

(1)

Le utilizan escuchan que en sus casas, quieren conservar



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Examiner Comments

Many candidates did what we see here in Q4(c). This candidate has understood what was heard, but has not specifically answered the question. The answer to 'what importance do other people's records have' should be along the lines of 'none/ very little'. The answers given here would work if the question were: 'how do we know that other people's records have no importance?' or 'why do other people's records have no importance?'

(c) ¿Qué importancia tienen los discos de otros músicos?

(1)

Poco- sólo escuchan en la casa. Quieren mantener una
identidad propia



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Examiner Comments

Compare this example with the previous one. Although most of the answer is similar: mentioning that other people's records are listened to at home and that the band wants to keep its own identity, look at the first word: 'poco'. This directly answers the question about what importance they have. This one little word makes the difference between one mark and none.



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Examiner Tip

Always read the question thoroughly before answering and then read it again after writing the answer to check that question and answer match!

Question 5

Question 5 is the shortest of the reading questions. In this examination series it was a text about alternative holidays. Candidates had to match a number of statements with a selection of holidays. It was very accessible to candidates of all abilities, with full marks being gained by most candidates.

Question 6

Question 6 is a longer reading text with questions and answers in English. This year, the text was about new measures to tackle obesity in schools. The most commonly encountered errors were in Q6(b) where caffeine, salt and sugar were all mentioned in one phrase in responses, e.g. "no caffeine, salt or sugar", whereas the recommendations in the text on these items were different. "Máquinas expendedoras" caused some problems and in Q6(d) there was sometimes no reference to the fact that 30 minutes is what pupils should/ need/ought to have for their meal times. The term "different plates" was not credited in Q6(e).

Many candidates scored well here, with poor spelling and grammar not usually hindering communication. A score of 3 or 4 out of 5 was common.

Question 7

Question 7 is the longest reading question, requiring answers in Spanish. Poor spelling and grammar is not penalised unless it causes ambiguity or a breakdown in communication.

Q7(a) was answered well overall. Q7(b) and Q7(c) were often mixed up even though 'medio rural' and 'ciudad' were in the questions. In Q7(c) the most common incorrect answers simply referred to the GPS not being exact enough or the signal being blocked by buildings. Q7(d) was answered without too many problems, Q7(e) was often answered with poor Spanish and expressions such as 'reemplazar' and 'si hubiera tomado algo' were rarely used. Mostly a phrase using 'dejar algo' and 'cambio' was enough to gain a mark. Q7(f) was answered well, the only problems arising when 'el tesoro' and 'el escondite' were mixed up. The first element of Q7(g), moving the object, was often correctly identified, but putting the new coordinates on the Internet was less often seen.

Overall, candidates performed reasonably well with this question, considering the level of difficulty of the text and the fact that the Spanish of the answers has to be good enough to convey the meaning effectively.

As mentioned above, first person verb forms must be avoided in responses (except in the essay question), as they cause inaccurate answers.

(d) ¿Por qué hay un libro en cada escondite?	(1)
<i>Para escribir cuando estuve allí</i>	



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has made an attempt to use his/her own words in the answer to this question, but unfortunately has opted for a first person. 'In order to write when I was there' cannot be right.



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Examiner Tip

Candidates would need to learn the first person preterite tense for the essay in Question 8, but they should endeavour to learn even more third person forms for Questions 4 and 7.

Question 8

The essay in Question 8 was about a pillow fight used to combat stress. Candidates had to write a report that included an eye-witness account, a description of the reaction of a participant, reasons for feeling stress and suggestions about how to overcome stress.

The topic was very accessible for candidates, who seemed particularly comfortable with the final two bullet points. Many of them had obviously practised writing about stress, as the quality of language often improved in the second half of the essays.

Although the first bullet point was always covered, the eye-witness account was frequently just a disappointing rehashing of the stimulus. Some candidates did try to add interest by describing the many colours of pillows used and the best ones wrote about clouds of feathers in the air, the arrival of the police or the number of participants gradually swelling.

The second bullet point, which was supposed to be an account of the reaction of one participant, was not covered well. In many cases this just seemed to be a continuation of the first bullet point, or was a description of the crowd in general. The best examples included an interview with someone or a description of one specific person, perhaps starting out somewhat depressed but ending up flushed and smiling.

Many candidates used a report style although there were instances of a letter to a friend. Many fluent writers overlooked the word-limit and could not access the highest marks for content as one or two bullet points were covered beyond the maximum number of words permitted. In order to be able to access the full range of marks for content, all the bullet points must be addressed (and developed) within 220 words. Candidates need to get a good balance across the 4 points without using up words on an unnecessary preamble – developing each point effectively.

Common language errors were with 'gustar' and preterite verb forms. The 'viste' in the question lead many candidates to use 'visto' for 'I saw'. It was interesting that many candidates included correct, complex subjunctives but failed to use common verbs forms correctly.

The best answers were often very straightforward in content, but read like someone addressing a magazine's readers, with points made simply but effectively in good Spanish.

The average mark given was 20 or 21 out of 30.

The bullet points do not all have to be developed to the same degree, but the highest marks for content can only be gained if all the words used are made to count and irrelevance is avoided.

La mayoría de los participantes creó que era una manera fantástica para evitar el estrés mientras prevenir el daño de otra gente, pero hablé con uno participante que creó que era "estúpida" y "sin punto". Me parece que más personas jóvenes disfrutaron la guerra que personas viejas, pero ~~es~~ es normal.

Hoy en día, hay mucha gente ~~que~~ sufre de estrés. Soy una adolescente y ~~estoy~~ ^{tenso} de estrés mucho de tiempo a causa de colegio y mis exámenes. Otras personas sufren de estrés a causa de los problemas financieros, otras a causa de los problemas con sus familias. En general, el estrés es un gran problema, y debemos hacer algo.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate obviously feels on safer ground when writing about the causes of stress than imagining the reaction of a participant. It was common to see this pattern. Notice how much more detailed is the second paragraph here. The first paragraph, though containing about the same number of words, is not nearly so packed with detail. The first two and a half lines are unnecessary preamble and the final two and a half stray away from the point. What examiners were looking for here was the reaction of a participant. This is covered only by the half sentence: "hablé con un participante que creó que era 'estúpida' y 'sin punto'."



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Examiner Tip

Make every word count. If you really have little to say on one bullet point, then use the extra words to enhance one of the other points; do not opt for repetition or irrelevance as these will not score additional marks. If you develop every point you will score well for content.

Uno de los participantes acababa de llegar cuando de repente alguien le golpeó, pero en vez de enfadarse, le volvió la bofetada. Al principio, él creía que esta guerra no le iba a beneficiar porque en realidad las guerras de almonadas suelen pelear entre los niños pero después de unos golpes, se daba cuenta que lo ~~era~~^{estaba} pasando bomba y por eso no estaba tan estresado como antes. 20



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has developed the second point very well and stuck exactly to what was asked: give the reaction of one of the participants. S/he has also moved smoothly between the preterite and the imperfect and has used pronouns and connectives accurately. This essay was awarded full marks.

Una guerra de almohadas pública

Ayer, ~~esta~~ estaba caminando a través de los calles de Madrid cuando ~~se me fue~~ ~~encontré~~ una guerra de almohadas en la calle. Mucha gente, ~~casi todo~~ ^{estaban} pienso ~~casi todo~~, ~~estaban~~ agrediendo los otros con sus almohadas.

¡Fui muy amasante a ver! Todos ~~estaban~~ ^{estaban} riendo y ~~estaba~~ ~~que~~ también cinco hombres con jaquetas naranjas que estaban ~~est~~ controlando

los participantes. Fue gente de ~~muchas~~ ^{nuevas} edades, ~~desde siete o ocho años hasta una mujer~~ ~~que dije~~ ^{dice} me que ~~estaba~~ ^{estaba} 76!



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Examiner Comments

The language used here was awarded much less than the previous example, but the development of ideas is equally good. There is a title, some facts and the atmosphere of the event is conveyed very well indeed.



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Examiner Tip

Use some imagination, but keep your language within what you can manage. Simple can still be effective.

Paper Summary

In this summer's exam, candidates performed slightly less well than in the previous two series, although on some individual questions, the performance was similar. Questions 2, 3 and 5 offered candidates of all abilities the chance to succeed and the majority earned full marks.

There were examples of outstanding ability in writing, where tenses and other grammatical structures were used accurately and appropriately. Conversely, there were also instances of poor language skills and some candidates who were so unprepared for the standard required that they were unable to write more than a few words in the essay question.

Examiners frequently read essays that contained sophisticated, pre-learned expressions (e.g. subjunctives and idioms) that stood out amongst basic grammar and spelling errors. While candidates are given credit for these "islands" of high value language, they should be encouraged to practise the essential forms of familiar structures first in order to produce basic, accurate Spanish before embarking on more sophisticated language.

It was disappointing to find so many essays that exceeded the 220 word limit, as many of these scored a lower mark than the candidates were capable of. It was also noted that a large number of scripts were hard to read due to poor handwriting, a lot of crossing out and, in some cases, the use of pencil.

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