

Examiners' Report
June 2013

GCE Spanish 6SP02 01

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Introduction

This paper tests listening, reading and writing. There are a variety of question types, text length and answer styles. The listening and reading sections start gently, with a question requiring a cross in a box, and end with a more challenging question that demands an answer in Spanish. The writing section is one essay question, where there are four bullet points to cover.

All of the General Topic Areas were represented in this paper and overall, students performed at a similar level to last summer's cohort. In particular, in the essay question, there were examples of excellent Spanish that was undermined by not sticking to the word limit. When an essay reaches 220 words, the examiner will read on until there is a natural break in the sense of the sentence (eg where there should be a comma or full-stop) and nothing further will be considered. This can result in one, two or sometimes even three bullet points being discounted. The consequence of this rubric infringement has a serious effect on the mark for content that can be awarded.

The examining team was occasionally faced by an almost illegible script. Poor or faint handwriting make marking very difficult and although examiners will always try to decipher what they have in front of them, clearly poor presentation is not in the best interests of the students. Students should avoid writing in pencil and especially writing over in pen something already written in pencil. A lot of students, who presumably are aware of their poor handwriting, opted to write in capitals, which was a sensible precaution.

Question 2

Q1 was a listening text on binge drinking, where students had to complete four sentences from a range of possible endings. On average, students scored 3 marks. The most difficult part of the question was Q1(ii), perhaps because the "actividades arriesgadas" was not recognised as a synonym for "comportamiento peligroso".

Q2 was a radio discussion about the rise of lollipops as an alternative to cigarettes. Students had to select 4 correct statements out of 8. The average score was 3 marks.

Question 3

Q3 was a podcast about difficulties in sleeping. Students had to complete a summary of the passage by filling in four missing words. This question proved slightly harder than the previous two questions, although a similar average (around 3 marks) was recorded. The hardest part of the question appeared to be Q3(d) (which should have been answered with "los muebles"). Only around half of students identified this correctly.

Question 4

Q4 is the most challenging of the listening tasks. It is always an interview with questions and answers in Spanish and this time the interviewee was Enrique Iglesias.

In Q4(a) many students correctly identified 'energía' as the correct answer, but 'emoción permanente' was the most common incorrect answer. Although Q4(b) was generally answered well, mis-spellings sometimes prevented students from scoring, common mistakes were 'crear/creer' and 'compañía/campaña/compañia'. Question Q4(c) needed more thought than many students gave it. The question asked, "why was he asked about the supermarket". Answers that simply said 'he went to the supermarket last night' or 'he doesn't go often' did not answer the question. Answers that related visits to the supermarket to fame or loss of private life were awarded marks.

In Q4(d), most students were able to convey that a fan had hidden for hours under a table, but explaining Enrique's reaction to this was not always successful, so the full 2 marks eluded many. Sometimes the reaction was missed altogether and other times the answer suggested not that the behaviour was 'curioso' but that the fan did it because she was 'curiosa'.

Q4(e) was generally answered well, although mixing up 'le gusta' and 'le gustaría' meant that a mark was often missed. 'Gustar' continues to be a difficulty for candidates, in spite of it being such a basic structure. 'Se gustaría' was accepted to show comprehension of the text, but 'te gustaría' and 'me gustaría' were not.

Examiners try to be as generous as possible in accepting mis-spellings as this is a comprehension, rather than a writing exercise. At times, the degree of mis-spelling is so great that meaning is lost and marks cannot be awarded.

(iii) en la casa el pero es sus compañía.



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Examiner Comments

In this example, there are so many mistakes that no marks could be awarded for this answer.

(ii) no está solo en la casa porque el ^{tiene} perro su perro



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Examiner Comments

In this example, the spelling of 'perro' is wrong. Generally when one word turns into another, a mark cannot be given. In this case, examiners felt that although 'pero' is another word, in the context it would not be misunderstood, so a mark could be given.



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Examiner Tip

It is worth spending some time thinking about spelling rules, especially when different letter combinations have similar sounds. Practise the difference between 'r' and 'rr', 'ña', 'ñía' etc. You should also try breaking the sounds you hear in a listening comprehension into different sized chunks, ie are you listening to one long word or is it two shorter words?

Question 6

Q5, the first of the reading passages, concerned four people blogging about their travel preferences. Students needed to decide who said what from a selection of five statements. An average score of 4 was obtained. Interestingly, the part where students scored best was Q5(iii), which required the most inference.

Q6 is a Spanish text that has comprehension questions in English to be answered in English. This time the text was about the use of social networks in recruitment.

Q6(a) proved surprisingly difficult, with many students using their general knowledge rather than the text. Answers often simply referred to how a social network can be helpful when selecting applicants, rather than the large number of applicants applying for each position.

Q6(c) was rarely answered correctly; responses about bathing costumes were quite common here. Q6(d) was generally answered correctly, but in Q6(e) 'copa' was frequently mis-translated as 'cup' and even sometimes as 'copy'. No marks were awarded for these mis-translations.

Sometimes a student has obviously understood the text, but the answer they give is so poorly expressed that the wrong information is given.

An employer will worry if he appears ^{in every picture} with a glass of alcohol in his hand. (1)



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

In this example, the pronoun 'he' creates the impression that the answer refers to the employer, rather than to the employee. No mark was awarded here.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Re-read your answers, would someone who had not read the text be able to understand what you want to say?

Question 7

Q7 is an extended reading comprehension with questions and answers in Spanish. It carries 10 marks and is the most challenging of the comprehension questions.

This text was about protests by students over the education system in Chile. Q7(a) and Q7(b) were, in the main, answered correctly. Q7(c) was more difficult, requiring students to infer the link between a 'kissing protest' and their demands on the government. They could answer that the protest matched their feelings and their slogan ('passion for education') or that a kiss symbolises commitment and they wanted the government to make a commitment to improving education. More students mentioned the element of passion than managed to explain the idea of 'compromiso', but few went far enough in their answers to gain the mark.

There was a lot of injudicious lifting which meant that answers were often incomplete, inaccurate or contradictory. This was particularly noticeable in Q7(d), where 'los padres' was sometimes identified, but 'los nuevos profesionales' less so and answers revolving around private universities were frequent. Q7(e), Q7(f) and Q7(g) were generally successful.

Although material lifted from the text can be acceptable, where the material is not correctly targeted it will not score marks. It is always important to identify the kind of information required in an answer, eg a date, a person, an amount, a reason etc.

*El fin del esquema que permite a algunos universitarios privados
También no pagar impuestos. recibir fondos extra*



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

In this example, the student has completely overlooked the 'quiénes' in the question, so has not given the correct type of information.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Highlight the question word (qué, quién, dónde etc) and when you have completed the answer go back and check whether you have given the type of information that was asked for.

Although brief answers are often the best, ideas do need to be complete.

(c) ¿Por qué era muy apropiada esta forma de protesta?

(1)

Los besos representan un compromiso.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

In this example, only half of the idea is given. This candidate has identified that kisses represent a type of commitment, but not why this makes them appropriate for the protest.

Los organizadores utilizan las redes sociales para convocar la protesta.

(c) ¿Por qué era muy apropiada esta forma de protesta?

Besar es un tipo de compromiso y una demostración de pasión. Los estudiantes quieren que el gobierno haga un compromiso y tenga pasión por la educación.

(1)



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

In this example, the same idea is given, but is developed further and a mark was awarded. In fact this candidate has given two reasons why kisses are appropriate, either one would have been enough for a mark.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Ask yourself whether someone who had not read the text would have a full understanding of the information required by the question, if they read your answer.

Question 8

The last question of the paper is an essay, to be written following a general scenario and four bullet points. There is always a short stimulus to 'set the scene' and from which vocabulary may be borrowed.

In this series, candidates had to write about a new clothes shop in their area. They had to describe the opening day, the impact of the shop on the local community, the importance of fashion for young people and what to do with clothes that are no longer needed.

The third bullet point, about the importance of fashion for young people, was by far the best handled. Many candidates explained how fashion allows young people to express their identity, either by being individual or by wearing the same as their friends, which helps them to be part of a group. There were some very mature paragraphs giving the darker side of following fashion, where wearing the wrong thing can lead to bullying and marginalisation.

The final point, about dealing with unwanted clothes, also saw some very pleasing answers that included recycling, donating to charity, selling on eBay and passing on to younger siblings, being creative and turning something old into something new. Some students even said that old clothes could be taken to the new shop and exchanged for vouchers towards new clothes.

The first two bullet points were sometimes rather disappointing. While the best descriptions of the opening day told of queues, champagne, celebrities and fights over items of clothing, many candidates settled for a very pedestrian description of the weather and what was inside the shop. A surprising number of students failed to recognise that 'acaba de abrirse' and 'abrió' were in the past tense, and they wrote, instead, about the opening day in the future. While this was not specifically penalised, it often led to a weak answer, which could not score highly for content. Use of past tenses was often inaccurate. The imperfect rarely appeared and even the preterite was poorly handled by many students. The past participle of 'abrir' was pretty much unknown, even though 'abierto' is a very common adjective.

When describing the impact on the community, many answers relied on explaining the importance of fashion (which was then repeated in the third bullet point). There were, however, examples of marvellously imaginative answers concerning increased employment, happier citizens and competition amongst other businesses.

Students should be strongly reminded about the word-count, which is strictly enforced. There were a large number of essays, often written in near-native level Spanish, which failed to score much for content as only one or two of the bullet points were dealt with within the 220 word limit.

A range of complex structures and vocabulary is essential in order to gain a high language mark, but this should not be at the expense of relevant, interesting content.

No obstante si hubiera sabido los beneficios	57
potenciales de la nueva ^{empresa} tienda ^{habría}	63
Comprado mi propia tienda. Es probable que	70
las personas desfasadas, como mi madre,	76
tengan opiniones negativas sobre las empresas	
extranjeras, pero no ^{cambiarán} mea que podrían podría	85
mostrar estas creencias al cuando sean ^{observen}	
este el impacto positivo. Me parece fundamental	95
que debida a 'Designat' la gente tenga nuevas	
oportunidades laborales. Mas importante, la	
ropa se ^{sea} asequible y original . Venden sus	102
productos a precios razonables para que los	
jovenes puedan comprar la ropa.	



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Examiner Comments

This student was obviously determined to pack in as many subjunctives as possible. While this was rewarded in the mark given for language, it had a negative impact on the content mark. This extract is a response to the bullet point about impact on the community. There is little to tell us of this impact here.

EMPLEAREMOS ALREDEDOR DE TREINTA PERSONAS DESDE
LA COMUNIDAD. A LAS TARDES DAREMOS CLASES DE MODA
POR TODOS QUE DESEA APRENDER MÁS. APOYAMOS NUESTROS
TRABAJADORES
~~TRABAJADORES~~
~~EMPLEADOS~~ CON SUBEDUCACIÓN EN LA INDUSTRIA. SE SI
UN DEPENDIENTE SEA
ALGO EMPLEADO DESEA QUE PODRÍA SER UN DISEÑADOR,
SE APOYARÉ.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has displayed a much lower level of language, but the content is far superior. Here there are several ideas about how the community will benefit from the arrival of the new shop.



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Examiner Tip

Resist the temptation to fill every paragraph with subjunctives. One or two, used in an appropriate place will be more impressive. Make sure that you give several, relevant ideas for each bullet point, in order to get a high content mark.

Paper summary

Based on their performance on this paper, students are offered the following advice:

- Always take note of the rubric instructions, particularly regarding word limits on extended writing questions.
- In Q8 try to write several ideas about each bullet point (but try to avoid over emphasising on just one)
- Include subjunctive expressions in appropriate places, rather than fill a paragraph with them
- Give clear answers to comprehension questions and explain your ideas fully
- Practise using "gustar" for different people and in different tenses
- Learn spelling rules; it sounds boring, but it could help you understand a listening text and avoid giving the wrong information

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