

Examiners' Report
June 2015

GCE Spanish 6SP02 01

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June 2015

Publications Code US042674

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Introduction

The Understanding and Written Response paper tests candidates' ability to extract information from both recorded and written texts. These texts are of varying length and complexity and there are different question styles ranging from multiple choice to written answers in Spanish and English. The topics covered in this year's comprehension questions were school, bicycle lanes, friends, a Formula One driver, health, fashion and technology and work experience.

Candidates also had to write an essay of 200-220 words on the subject of working as a volunteer during the holidays. Examiners were delighted to encounter a high number of thoughtful and imaginative essays which revealed this year's cohort to be an exceedingly caring and mature group of young people, keen on protecting the environment or working with the underprivileged. They were largely very pleasant to read.

While there was, as ever, a wide range of ability reflected in the examination papers marked, there seemed to be a larger number than usual of highly accurate scripts where close to full marks were awarded. It was very pleasing to see that most candidates had been well trained in the requirements of the tasks and could handle a range of tenses with some success.

Question 1

In question 1, the first of the listening tasks was about a teacher at a school in a remote area. Candidates had to find the correct ending to four sentences summarising the text. For each question, there was a choice of three possible endings. The question was quite accessible to the majority of candidates. The average score was 3 or 4 out of 4 marks.

Question 2

Question 2 was a listening text about the installation of bike lanes. There was a list of eight statements and candidates had to find the four that were true. The average score on this question was 3 out of 4 marks.

Question 3 (a)

In this text, candidates needed to find the correct word (from a list of eight) to complete four sentences summarising a text about a school reunion. Candidates should be advised to read the sentences before listening, in order to cut down the number of possible answers to each question, based on grammar; e.g. "Un amigo organizó..." could only be followed by "un viaje" or "una reunión". Once again, this question caused no problems for the majority of candidates. An average score of 3 or 4 marks was achieved here, also.

Question 4

The last and most challenging of the listening tasks was an interview with the Mexican Formula One driver, Sergio Pérez, with questions and answers in Spanish. Q4(a) should have been answered with the number "6", but some candidates stated that seven drivers had finished the race before him or even thought that his final position, "séptimo", meant 70 and that therefore 69 drivers finished before him. A number of candidates thought that the question was trickier than it really was and stated that "todos" finished before him as he had been disqualified.

In Q4(b), most candidates gained both marks, although some used the false friend "confidente", which was not credited, or they stated that he needed to work with his trainer. In Q4(c), although many candidates were awarded both marks, some earned only one mark as they gave the same piece of information in two ways, i.e. "Mexicans had waited a long time for a Formula One driver" and "Sergio was the first Mexican driver for many years". The second mark could only be awarded for answers that included the fact that Formula One is very popular in Mexico.

Q4(d) asked why he is called "Checo". This was answered correctly by many candidates, but some said that all Mexicans are called Checo or all racing drivers are called Checo or that he is called Checo because his name is Checo; none of these was acceptable. Q4(e) and Q4(f) were generally answered correctly, although sometimes marks were lost because answers were based on the idea of having "un objetivo". The average score on this question was around 6 out of 8 marks.

Candidates do not need to write in full sentences but their answers do need to be clear. When candidates rely too heavily on transcribing from the text, answers can often be confused.

Texto 4: Sergio Pérez

4 Escucha esta entrevista con el conductor de Fórmula 1 mexicano. Contesta las siguientes preguntas **en español**.

(a) ^{How many drivers arrived at the end before first career/race} ¿Cuántos conductores llegaron al final antes de Sergio en su primera carrera?

(1)

6

(b) ^{How he feels at the start} ¿Cómo se siente Sergio al comenzar esta temporada? **Da 2 ideas.**

(2)

(i) Está muy preparado.

(ii) Tiene más experiencia.

(c) ^{why Mexicans they have so much interest in} ¿Por qué tienen los mexicanos tanto interés en Sergio? **Da 2 ideas.**

(2)

(i) Han esperado para un piloto de Fórmula 1 mexicana.

(ii) La Fórmula 1 ^{se hace más} es ~~muy~~ popular en el país.

(d) ¿Por qué tiene el apodo "Checo"?

(1)

Los mexicanos se llaman todos los Sergios por el nombre Checo.

(e) ^{was the 1st years of competition} ¿Cómo fueron los primeros años de competición para Sergio?

(1)

No fueron fáciles.

(f) ^{what they have to do (new drivers) to be successful.} ¿Qué tienen que hacer los nuevos conductores de Fórmula 1 para tener éxito?

(1)

Deben trabajar ~~duro~~ diariamente.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has answered all questions succinctly and has clearly expressed all of the required information using his or her own words.



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Examiner Tip

Spend a little extra time thinking of ways to phrase your answer. Is there a simpler way than trying to use the exact words you have heard?

Question 5

In question 5, the first of the reading questions was about health services and consisted of four paragraphs followed by five statements, each of which needed to be attributed to one of these paragraphs. The average score was 4 or 5 out of 5 marks.

Question 6

Question 6 was a more challenging question, based on a text about fashion items with a technological twist, e.g. shoes with GPS. The questions and answers were in English. The average score was around 3 out of 5. Many candidates answered Q6(a) well, although some merely stated that the shoes vibrated without saying why. Others said that they lead you to your destiny rather than your destination, which could not be credited. In Q6(b) there were many correct answers; those whose answers did not earn a mark had generally missed a piece of information, for example they said that there was a jacket with a keypad for a phone, without mentioning that it was on the sleeve. Others missed out on a mark because they mistranslated "bolso" as hat, purse or pocket. Q6(c) was often not answered well, with candidates stating that the design or the product should be invisible. Q6(d) was generally answered correctly. The main issues in Q6(e) were mistakes with the number: "docena" being translated as "dozens", "twenty" and even "200" and also the word "inversores", which was often rendered as "inventors" rather than "investors". Some candidates thought that designers were going to look at Verdaguer's designs or that they were going to show their designs to him.

- 6** Read the passage above and answer the following questions **in English**. Your answers must relate exclusively to the passage and convey **all** the relevant information provided.

(a) How do the shoes use GPS?

(1)

They vibrate the feet ~~where~~ left and right
until you reach the destination

(b) Describe one other invention.

(1)

a jacket with a phone in the sleeve

(c) What is most important for the designer?

(1)

explains that the technology must not be
seen in the clothes.

(d) Why is the USA a good place for new inventions?

(1)

Because there are professionals who are
dedicated to this.

(e) What does Verdaguer do for other designers?

(1)

Offers the opportunity for them to present
their ideas to investors

(Total for Question 6 = 5 marks)



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Examiner Comments

This candidate's responses are not framed in accurate English, but the meaning is still clear and unambiguous, so full marks were awarded.

Question 7

The final reading comprehension question was an extended text about work experience. There were some excellent responses, with many candidates demonstrating a thorough comprehension of the source material and a high level of competence in manipulating the language. In some cases, less able candidates tried to answer the questions by lifting indiscriminately.

An average score of 6 or 7 out of 10 marks was achieved.

Q7(a) was mostly answered well, although some candidates lost the mark as they referred to 52.3% as simply "la tasa de desempleo" without mentioning "los menores de 25 años" or "los jóvenes". In Q7(b) a significant number of candidates did not read the question carefully enough and answered as if the question asked about the consequences of lacking studies, not of having them. e.g. they simply wrote "el paro" and not "(para) evitar el paro". A number of candidates misunderstood altogether and described the two different apprenticeship schemes you could get on. Q7(c) was generally answered correctly, although a few candidates thought that the right answer was "16 to 25" and some others even wrote "los menores de 25" instead of "los mayores de 25".

Q7(d) caused few problems, but Q7(e) seemed to be the trickiest element of this question. Many candidates tried to answer the question from the point of view of the young apprentice and not of the "empresa" as the response requires, lifting from the text "no tienen garantizado...". They did not reformulate the answer to make it clear it was the students who were not guaranteed to be paid, or the companies who did not have to pay. Q7(f) was mostly answered well, although the good results "en alemán", rather than "en Alemania" was too ambiguous to be credited. The benefit of the doubt was, however, given to candidates who had written "en Aleman". In Q7(g) a number of candidates only gained one mark because instead of "colaborar/participar/ ayudar" they said "colaborar entre ellos/ trabajar con otras empresas". More candidates gained the second point for saying that companies would benefit from the new system but the expression "es de esperar" caused many points to be lost since many candidates answered expressing an idea of the firms having to wait to get the benefits.

Although answers do not need to be written in error free Spanish and misspellings can be tolerated, if a word morphs into another because of a misspelling, then ambiguity is created and marks cannot be given.

(c) ¿Quiénes no se beneficiarán del Contrato de Aprendizaje en el futuro, cuando la situación económica mejore?

cuando la situación económica mejore id'll
personas que son mejor de la edad 26 años, no
podrán participar en la sistema.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has written "mejor" for "mayor" and therefore changed the meaning of the sentence. It cannot earn a mark.



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Examiner Tip

"Mayor" and "mejor" are often mixed up. Check that you know which is which.

Question 8

Candidates were given a short stimulus passage about voluntary work during the holidays and were asked to write a report about their summer working as a volunteer. There were four bullet points to address: why you decided to work as a volunteer, a description of what you did, how you will help the organisation in future and the good or bad aspects of working during the holidays. As always, it was essential that candidates firmly fixed their response on these bullet points. If one point was missed out, a maximum content score of 9 was all that could be achieved (rather than a possible 15). It is worth teachers stressing the importance of covering the bullet points. Word length is another possible pitfall. The question clearly states that candidates should write 200-220 words. Answers that exceed this number of words sometimes score a lower mark for content because one or more of the bullet points is covered in the section beyond the maximum word limit, which is not marked.

The topic seemed to be one which many candidates knew well. Examiners encountered many coherent, well-developed and accurate essays from candidates who were well versed in the requirements of the exam regarding word count and bullet points.

Less able candidates were hampered either by their lack of linguistic ability or their lack of imagination, writing unconvincing and disjointed compositions. Many candidates focused on the stimulus picture and said they got involved in environmental work. Some original answers included working for 'Médicos sin Fronteras' as a nurse assistant in Congo helping children with typhus diseases, working in a shop recycling and selling clothes, helping a vet with abandoned animals and teaching surf in a summer camp for children. Some candidates were unaware that 'voluntary work' meant you do not get paid for it and wrote more generally about part-time jobs.

The best responses contained linking words, idioms, varied verb tenses (including subjunctive past tenses) and sophisticated and very relevant vocabulary.

Some candidates produced elegant and convincing phrases like "Hice esto con el propósito de conocer a otras personas".

There were problems with the use of the preterite, with the 3rd person singular featuring often instead of the 1st person singular. There was often inconsistent accuracy; examiners found examples of excellent and poor language in the same script. One candidate who used terms like "contribuyamos", "se rumorea", "gratificante" and "conlleva" in other parts of the same essay also wrote word for word translations from English, such as "contentoy cómodo en el lugar vivimos", " me gustaría todas personas ser conocidas" and "mejor lugar vivir en también". Another candidate who used subordinate clauses with "puesto que" correctly and vocabulary such as "imprescindible", " es vital" and "no obstante la nueva experiencia", in other parts of the same essay also wrote "trabajamos mejorar", "bien tiempo", "que no podía imagen". One candidate, who wrote almost incomprehensibly throughout a whole paragraph, finished flamboyantly with "Por encima de todo es esencial que promovamos nuestros proyectos nuevos".

Some examiners noted that handwriting was often very difficult to read, not helped by untidy crossing out, arrows and asterisks. It is recommended that candidates leave themselves enough time (around an hour) for Q8 and that they either write on alternate lines (therefore having more space for later additions) or rewrite particularly untidy responses. It is preferable if candidates use one paragraph per bullet point. This makes it easier for both candidate and examiner to see that all the points have been covered.

The average score was 24 out of 30 marks.

In order to score highly for content, each bullet point needs not only to be mentioned, but developed with several ideas.

Los estudiantes del Colegio Inglés de Bruselas,

Os escribo para hablar sobre el voluntarismo. Decidí trabajar como voluntario durante las vacaciones de verano porque mi abuela fue voluntaria cuando ~~era~~ ^{era} más joven. Me recataba, todos los fines de semana, las historias que se ~~pasaban~~ ^{pasan} en el centro de voluntarismo, cuando ella estaba trabajando ahí, es por esta razón ^{yo} que ~~yo~~ quería comenzar a estar voluntario.



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Examiner Comments

In this example, the candidate has developed one main idea about why s/he decided to do voluntary work (grandma did it) by adding more detail.

El mejor verano solidario

Todos somos muy afortunados en Europa y personalmente también pienso que somos muy desagradecidos. Este verano decidí pasar mis vacaciones con la organización 'Ayúdalos' en México. Tomé esta decisión porque ^{no} me parecen ~~que sean justas~~ ^{que sean justas} ~~justas~~ por las cosas por las que los pobres ~~de~~ mexicanos ~~están~~ pasando. Podemos ~~ayudarlos~~ ^{creo} ~~pienso~~ que por esta ~~razón~~ ^{razón} hay que visitar el país.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate has given a couple of different, but related ideas: we are fortunate, and should be more grateful, we must help others less fortunate.



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Examiner Tip

For each bullet point, you could give two or three different ideas or one idea described fully. It is possible to do this within the word count, so don't get carried away and write a hundred words for just one bullet point.

Paper Summary

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

- Read the question again after you have answered it to check that your answer matches the type of information required.
- Consider alternative ways of wording your answer; clear and concise is best.
- If you decide to copy words from the text, make sure they fit the question; often you will need to change some parts of a 'lift'.
- Practise the first and third person singular of the preterite, as these are often confused.
- Avoid word-for-word translations from English, they very rarely work.
- Cover all four bullet points in Question 8.
- Use one paragraph per bullet point.
- Do not write more than 220 words in Question 8.
- Present Question 8 neatly, perhaps by writing on alternate lines or by re-writing.

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