

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key Messages

- Exercises 1, 2 and 3 focus on reading skills and candidates are required to understand and respond to information presented in a variety of forms. In this section of the paper, candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passages but also to be able to distinguish between facts, ideas and opinions. They should demonstrate the ability to extract relevant specific information from forms, letters and articles and scan for particular information, then organise and present it in a logical manner.
- Exercises 4 and 5 focus on writing skills and candidates need to show that they can communicate clearly and appropriately in written Chinese to convey information and express opinions. Candidates are expected to show control of a variety of grammatical structures and use a range of vocabulary. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by the candidates should be accurate.
- Answers should be written in black or blue ink. Answers should not be written first in pencil and then overwritten in ink as this makes them very difficult to read.
- In exercises where candidates are required to tick a certain number of boxes, such as Exercise 1, Question 1, candidates must not tick more/fewer than the required number of options. If a candidate makes a choice and then changes his/her mind, s/he must cross out the original choice very clearly.
- Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the Examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response provided by the candidate, which contains extra material that is incorrect, invented or contradictory.

General Comments

The majority of candidates were able to understand the reading passages in **Section 1** in detail. They also demonstrated a sound ability to communicate sophisticated ideas and could argue their cases convincingly in the writing exercises. The overall standard was very high.

In **Section 2** most candidates showed that they were capable of communicating competently in the target language. Some candidates this year needed to show a higher level of accuracy and fluency in the language used. Many responses successfully and clearly communicated interesting ideas, but care should be taken to ensure precision in using simple grammar structures. Candidates also need to take care when writing characters to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Candidates are reminded that when responding to a question requiring only one choice as the answer, as in **Exercise 1, Questions 2-5**, the mark can only be awarded if a candidate makes one correct choice. Two or more choices, whether in pencil or ink, **cannot** be credited.

Any material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

In **Question 1** candidates are required to identify the four true statements in a list of eight. Most candidates coped well with the format of the question, and realised they must only tick the required number of boxes. Performance on this opening question was good, with even the weakest candidates obtaining 3 or 4 marks. Statement **A** was sometimes missed as one of the correct answers. **Questions 2-5** are 3-option multiple choice questions, and were answered well by most candidates, showing that they were able to understand this part of the passage fully.

Exercise 2

Questions 6 - 13

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a blank form template, and have to complete it according to their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is needed to score highly in this exercise.

Generally, candidates did not face any difficulty in finding the correct information for completing the form. Most candidates also showed care and precision in completing the form. In **Question 6**, candidates needed to write the characters 曹玥 correctly in order to get the mark. In **Question 11**, 张老师 was accepted as a correct answer; candidates who opted to write the teacher's full name needed to write the characters correctly to be awarded the mark.

Question 8 asked which city the young author came from, and the correct answer was 武汉. A number of candidates gave 武汉向日葵 as the answer, which was not credited as it is not a city.

In **Question 13**, the rubric asked candidates to identify what 'in addition to fairy tales' the author's favorite book is (除了童话以外...). Candidates who gave 安徒生童话 as an answer therefore could not be awarded a mark. Candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions carefully.

Exercise 3 Questions 14 - 18

Candidates should be reminded that answers to **Exercise 3** need to be precise and accurate. They need to ensure that they communicate their answers clearly and without ambiguity.

Questions 14, 17 and 18 were answered well by most candidates. **Question 15** required candidates to identify two types of work undertaken by student volunteers. 拖地 and 打水 were considered as the same 'type' of work, and so were not awarded 2 marks. Candidates also needed to ensure that they included 聊天 in their answer. **Question 16** was tackled well. Candidates needed to provide a more accurate answer than just 老人们很高兴 / 高兴得不得了 to be credited.

Section 2

Exercise 4: Question 19

The question this year required candidates to describe the main character in a film they had seen and to express their opinions about the film. Weaker responses were characterised by the recounting of plot lines, rather than focussing on one of the characters in the film. Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters, and successfully addressed the tasks given in bullet points within the character limit. Candidates should be reminded to avoid producing excessively long responses. The most effective pieces of writing were those which maintained focus on the task and developed ideas at appropriate length.

In terms of language use, many candidates demonstrated that they could use simple grammatical structures effectively and precisely. In order to reach the highest marking bands, candidates also need to show that they can use more complex structures and sophisticated language. Centres should continue to support candidates in writing Chinese characters accurately. Candidates should be reminded that the use of idioms and sayings only enhances the quality of the language when used appropriately.

Exercise 5: Question 20

Exercise 5 is a task which invites candidates to present arguments for and against a topic, concluding with their own point of view. This year candidates were asked to write about whether a fashion company should be allowed to hold a fashion show in their school, using the students as models. Four written comments are provided as a stimulus to provoke candidates into thinking about the topic. These are suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, and it is expected that candidates will not simply re-state the ideas provided, but present their own ideas and opinions as well.

Most candidates could clearly state their opinions, and some managed to effectively organise their ideas into appropriate paragraphs, using connective words where appropriate. Candidates needed to generate persuasive arguments and to engage the reader's interest to be awarded the highest marks. An area where improvements could be made is on composing clear and logical arguments with appropriate supporting details.

Candidates are once again reminded of the need to produce accurate language. This is important both when using varied vocabulary and structures *and* in the use of basic structures.

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/02
Speaking

Key Messages

- Examiners must ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test, and should read the instructions given in the syllabus booklet well in advance of the speaking test period.
- Candidates need to show their ability to use a variety of structures and precise vocabulary consistently, both in the presentation and in the conversation sections.
- Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to enable candidates to show their command of the language.
- In the Topic Conversation, questions should not require candidates to repeat what they have said in the Presentation, as this will not provide new opportunities for them to use a wider range of vocabulary or structures to access higher marks.
- Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner must seek permission from Cambridge before the Speaking Test period starts. Centres using more than one Examiner were not always aware of the correct procedure for internal moderation. Feedback to such Centres was provided by the Moderator and should be acted upon in future sessions.
- Tests must be conducted in Mandarin.

General Comments

The majority of Centres were well-prepared for the conduct of the Speaking component, which resulted in tests being carried out successfully in most cases. The full range of performance was heard this year, with many candidates demonstrating their ability to communicate appropriately in spoken Mandarin Chinese and to confidently use a wide range of vocabulary and structures. A variety of topics were chosen for the presentation and well-discussed with Examiners. Most Examiners had done the necessary preparation, and asked a series of excellent searching questions.

It is expected that at this level, topics covered in the speaking test will relate to education, the world of work, current affairs, health and welfare, social relationships, etc. which will help to prepare candidates for their ongoing education or future employment. In a small number of cases, the topics that Examiners chose for the General Conversation were more appropriate for a foreign language examination, and questions were not in-depth enough for candidates at this level.

It is important that candidates choose a topic for the presentation which reflects their interests, as well as being related to an aspect of Chinese culture. It is also crucial that the Examiner asks a series of questions appropriate to the candidate's level. This should include questions that are more unpredictable, and enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously.

Examiners need to ensure that their candidates are put at ease and given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In order to give candidates the best possible chance, Examiners should ensure that they have read the syllabus carefully so that both the tests and the relevant administration are carried out correctly.

It was evident that the majority of candidates had prepared the presentation well, and the most successful topic conversations occurred where Examiners were familiar with the descriptors given in the mark scheme, and also managed to pitch questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where candidates were given opportunities to contribute to the conversation at some length and where open and engaging questions allowed the conversation to flow naturally. Candidates were rewarded for demonstrating a range of structures and vocabulary, and for showing the ability to respond and contribute to a conversation giving ideas and opinions. The strongest candidates showed precise use of a variety of structures and a solid range of vocabulary in their responses.

Duration of test

Candidates should be allowed to present their topic for two minutes. In this examination series there were many cases of excessively long presentations. The two conversation sections should be between four and five minutes each. In the interests of fairness to all candidates, each candidate must be allowed the full examination time in each conversation section, as stipulated in the syllabus.

Recorded sample: quality and composition

Many Centres managed to select a good recorded sample which evenly covered the full spread of performance in the Centre. Centres with permission to use more than one Examiner had taken care to ensure that both a good range of marks and different Examiners were represented on the sample.

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality and Centres are thanked for this. In order to ensure that recordings are clear, Centres are reminded to conduct the Speaking tests in a quiet place, away from any noise which may cause disruption. The recording should be checked at intervals by the Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. In some instances this year, the recording on the CD was almost inaudible, making moderation difficult. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings before sending to Cambridge.

A list of the featured recordings must be submitted with each CD. Each CD must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction needs to be made only once, and should be saved as a separate file (named 'recorded introduction'). The Examiner and not the candidate must introduce the candidate by name and number and the recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. The recording for each candidate must be on a separate file.

Internal moderation

All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of each Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre before a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge.

Where Centres with large numbers of candidates have been granted permission by Cambridge to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess Speaking tests, the coordinating Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the Examiners in the Centre. If a particular Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the Centre, the marks for candidates examined by that Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge.

Clerical checks

In the vast majority of Centres, the clerical work had been completed efficiently. It is essential that all clerical work is checked carefully so as to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. Errors in addition were found and corrected in a small number of Centres. Centres are reminded of the importance of careful checking of clerical work, and to ensure that all additions on the Working Mark Sheet as well as the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) are checked before submitting them to Cambridge.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well understood in most Centres. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often because candidates needed to communicate and express their thoughts and opinions more clearly. Some needed to demonstrate their ability to use a wider range of structures and vocabulary more precisely, for example, the use of 还是 and 或者, 比如 and 好像, 平静 and 安静, 尊敬 and 尊重, 团聚 and 团结, 平均 and 平衡, 丰富 and 丰盛, etc.

There were some instances where marking was generous due to candidates being credited for giving the same information more than once: Centres need to be careful not to ask a similar series of questions either

between conversation sections, or ask questions which require the candidate to repeat information already given in the Presentation.

Comments on Specific Questions

Topic Presentation

The vast majority of candidates were well-prepared for the Topic Presentation, and demonstrated good knowledge of sayings and idioms as well as a wide range of different structures. Topics about Chinese culture and customs as well as social registers were heard in the presentations this year. Some interesting presentations included 'Chinese Tea Culture', 'Chinese Characters', 'The Changing Eating Habits of Chinese People', 'The Origin of Chinese Surnames', '从占领中环看代沟', etc.

Topic Conversation

A good range and quality of vocabulary and structures was heard in the Topic Conversations and the best performing candidates also gave correspondingly impressive performances in the discussions which followed. It is important that the Examiner listens carefully, adheres to the timings and pitches questions at an appropriate level, enabling candidates to show the full range of their ability.

General Conversation

At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A and B (Young people and education / Society); the other from Areas C and D (The world / Cultural diversity). Topics chosen for the General Conversation should not overlap with the content of Part Two, Topic Conversation in this Speaking test.

A variety of topics was heard in the General Conversations: 'environment', 'cities and public service', 'education and future plans', 'healthy eating habits', 'urban and rural life', 'generation gap', 'current affairs', 'friendship', 'holidays', 'festivals and customs' to name a few. Many Examiners were fully aware of the level of language and depth to which general topics should be discussed in this examination and pitched questions appropriately. In a few cases, questions were not challenging enough to allow candidates to express themselves fully. Centres are reminded that the treatment of topics such as 'School and education' should be more mature and in-depth at this level, including questions dealing with subjects such as *school discipline, the importance of learning languages, meaning of school uniform*, etc.

The best examining was when candidates were invited to express their opinions on a topic, or when Examiners raised a particular issue which gave candidates the opportunity to discuss both sides of the argument.