

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/01

Listening

General comments

This was the first year a listening component had been included in the examination, and it was pleasing to see that it was accessible to the majority of candidates. In general, the exercises worked well and discriminated across the full range of ability. Questions for all but the last exercise were objective, requiring non-verbal responses and visuals were used wherever possible. The spoken Chinese in the exam gradually increased in terms of difficulty and length, and questions moved from testing candidates' ability to understand short factual information to, in the later exercises, testing their ability to understand and identify opinions and explanations in narrated accounts and interviews.

It was gratifying to note the number of excellent performances from Centres all over the world. This is reassuring as it shows that Centres recognise the importance of listening and responding skills, and that these skills are being well taught in many Centres. It was pleasing to see that, in general, the topics and themes of the exercises were well within the knowledge and life experience of candidates from around the world.

We should remind Centres that questions requiring a short written response in Chinese are set in such a way that answers can be brief, and that candidates are allowed to write their answers in either Chinese characters or pinyin. The listening examination is a test of comprehension, so Examiners do not expect complete sentences in response to the questions. If candidates get into the habit of keeping their answers short, clear, and to the point, they can reduce the risk of adding extra incorrect material which can invalidate an otherwise correct response. Responses written in inaccurate Chinese are accepted provided that an answer's meaning remains clear.

Candidates from most Centres had been well prepared for the examination and were usually well aware of the requirements. Regrettably, a few candidates ticked more than one box in response to the multiple choice questions in **Section 1**. When responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, if a candidate makes 2 choices whether in pencil or ink, the mark **cannot** be awarded. Answers which the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. In **Section 2 Exercise 2**, some candidates ticked a total of only 4 instead of the required total of 5 boxes, while some others ticked more than 5. Candidates should be reminded that they must tick the number of boxes stated in the rubric. The format of the paper and the question rubrics will remain fairly constant from year to year. When preparing their candidates, Centres should ensure that candidates clearly understand the rubrics, as such familiarity can only aid and reassure them in the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Candidates generally did well on this exercise, which tested the comprehension of very short items of one or two sentences. Most candidates scored 4 or 5 marks.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise featured a short conversation about Xiao Ming's day at School. Candidates generally did well on this exercise. Most candidates scored 4 or 5 marks.

Some mistakes were made with **Question 6**, where option **B** was selected instead of **C**.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 11-15

This exercise tested the candidates' comprehension of a short weather forecast. Although most candidates did very well in this exercise, where difficulties were encountered, **Questions 14** and **15** proved to be the most challenging.

Exercise 2 Question 16

Candidates heard a conversation between a tourist and a tour guide, and they generally performed well on this exercise. The most common mistake made in this exercise was ticking box **E** instead of **D**. Other mistakes were ticking box **H** and, less frequently, ticking box **G**.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 17-21

This exercise featured five young people talking about their out of school activities. On the whole, candidates did very well with the questions. Most candidates scored 4 or 5 marks.

Exercise 2 Questions 22-25

Candidates heard an interview with a young English Student, Lily, who participated in a summer camp in China. As intended, this final exercise (targeted to test the top level IGCSE skills), elicited the widest range of performance. There were some very accessible questions, affording even the weakest candidates the opportunity to score one or two marks, but there were also questions to challenge the most able candidates.

Question 22 was generally well answered; however, some candidates only answered '中文很好' and neglected to include the reference to *spoken* Chinese that was sought here.

Question 23 was generally well answered, but some candidates, in answering part of the question simply wrote '在英国学了中文', which did not answer the question and gave no indication of the fact that Lily took Chinese lessons.

Question 24 was generally well answered.

Question 25 proved difficult. Some candidates did not show sufficient understanding here and gave unrelated answers; some candidates added additional material which did not feature in the original transcript, or which distorted an otherwise correct answer. For example, some candidates wrote '帮助中国学生来英国学习英语'. Candidates should be reminded that the inclusion of extra incorrect material can invalidate an otherwise correct response.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The majority of candidates performed very well in this paper and it is pleasing to see an improvement in the standard demonstrated by candidates compared to previous years. The writing sections in particular were executed well, with candidates using well constructed sentences and correct word order, which gave the written pieces more fluency.

Candidates should be reminded, however, that Chinese characters should be used as much as possible and the use of English for place names should be avoided. Pinyin should not be used.

Some common errors were observed, such as candidates not knowing the difference between '的', '地' and '得'. A considerable number of candidates could not distinguish between '做' and '坐'.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Questions 1-11

Most candidates did well in these exercises. Candidates should be reminded to take care in these early exercises to read the questions fully and look at the pictures carefully, to avoid making simple errors which may lose them marks.

In the third exercise, **Question 10** proved to be the most challenging, as candidates needed to know the difference between '服务员', '售货员' and '厨师'.

Question 12

Candidates were required to write a short letter to a friend in which they mentioned the weather, somewhere they were going to and when they would be back. Candidates needed to include each of these 3 elements in their answer in order to gain the full 3 marks available for communication. A further 2 marks were available for appropriateness of language.

On the first point regarding weather, many candidates could not write '热' but used '日' instead. A number of candidates did not answer the third point ('什么时候回来').

Section 2

Questions 13-22

Most candidates were able to locate some correct answers in the passage even when they did not fully understand the content. For **Question 16**, some candidates misunderstood the question and said '女的是护士，男的是医生' when the correct answer actually required candidates to give the place of work.

Question 23

This question required candidates to write about their summer holiday. The overall performance in this section was satisfactory. Candidates demonstrated their ability to convey the required information and do so with a higher level of fluency than seen in previous years.

10 marks were available for communication, 1 mark for each item of relevant information conveyed. In some cases, candidates repeated the same information in their answer, which could only be credited once. Occasionally, full marks could not be awarded for communication because insufficient content was included in what was otherwise a very good answer.

A number of candidates did not answer the third bullet point which was '你怎么去'. Candidates who did attempt to answer this element of the question made a number of mistakes. Some found it difficult to use the correct verb and wrote '用飞机' or '用火车', and others used '飞车'.

Section 3

Questions 24-28

Section 3 is the most challenging part of this paper, and some candidates struggled to understand the text and questions. The performance was comparable to that of previous years.

Question 29-34

Question 29 proved to be the most difficult, and several mistakes were made in answering this question. Many said the reason why '他看起来很特别' was that '他一点儿都不觉得不好意思' or '站在一群大学生中间' while the correct answer should have been '他年龄最大'.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/03
Speaking

General remarks

Most Centres administered and carried out the tests very well, but in a minority of cases instructions were ignored, and this disadvantaged candidates. The Teachers' Notes booklet should be read carefully well in advance of the tests to ensure that the Speaking test is conducted and assessed correctly. Centres' attention is drawn to the points below.

Recording of candidates

- The recording should be checked at intervals by the Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. **For some Centres the cassette/CD received by the Moderator was almost inaudible, making moderation difficult.**
- Candidates should be seated close to the microphone so that they are clearly audible. If an external microphone is used, it should be placed to favour the candidate rather than the Examiner.
- The cassette/CD must not be stopped during the recording of each Speaking test.
- The candidates should be introduced by name and candidate number by the Examiner, **not by the candidates themselves.**

Conduct of the tests

- **The situations at the head of the Role plays should be read aloud in Chinese** by the Examiner before commencing each candidate's test. This is reassuring for the candidate and establishes that s/he is playing a role, not merely answering for him- or herself.
- There is **no need for any use of English** during the tests: each new section can be introduced in Chinese, for instance by saying something like 现在进行情景对话 A。 , 现在进入第二部分。 , 现在进行自由对话 吧。 etc.
- Candidates **should not be corrected** during the tests.
- Centres should ensure that the tests are conducted in a quiet place, ideally away from the noise of nearby lessons taking place, movement in corridors, bells sounding, etc.

Administration

Centres are reminded of their responsibility to check that the addition of marks for each candidate is correct, and also that the transcription of the total mark from the Summary Mark Sheet to Form MS1 has been done correctly, as in some Centres a number of errors were found. In large Centres it may be advisable for more than one person to check these numbers.

Detailed instructions on the size of the recorded sample to be submitted to CIE for moderation are provided in the Teachers' Notes Booklet. It is the Centre's responsibility to select the recorded sample in accordance with these instructions, ensuring the sample provided covers the range of marks awarded at the Centre.

It is helpful to the Moderator if asterisks (*) are put on the Summary Mark Sheet to indicate the candidates who have been included in the sample.

Care should be taken when preparing the sample for postage to ensure that cassettes/CDs are well packaged. CDs are particularly vulnerable to damage in transit, and need to be carefully packed.

Internal moderation

Where Centres have large numbers of candidates and wish to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking tests for their candidates, they must seek permission from CIE in advance. This will be

given on the understanding that the Centre puts procedures in place to ensure that the marks it awards are consistent for all candidates, irrespective of which Examiner conducted and assessed the examination. Examiners at the Centre must work together to ensure a common approach to the conduct of the Speaking test and the application of the mark scheme. One Examiner at the Centre must take responsibility for the standardisation of the marking of Examiners at the Centre. This person must ensure that all candidates taking the Speaking test at the Centre are judged against the same standards and that a valid rank order of candidates for the Centre as a whole is produced. Details of the Centre's standardisation procedures must be enclosed with the materials for moderation. A single recorded sample should be produced for moderation which should cover the range of marks awarded in the Centre and should as far as possible include equal numbers of recordings from each Examiner used. A Summary Mark Sheet should be submitted for each Examiner, with candidate names and numbers clearly entered.

Comments on specific questions

Role-plays

These role plays were handled well by most candidates, but some Centres would still benefit from practising this exercise with their candidates, in order to enable candidates to feel comfortable responding to the situations in accordance with the role they are playing, rather than trying to answer as 'themselves'. For example, if a candidate is asked "Where is the stadium?" they should be able to improvise a suitable answer and not feel that have to give directions to a real stadium.

Answers in the Role plays which are 'neutral' such as 对了 'yes' or 不知道 'I don't know' **cannot be rewarded any marks**, as they give no indication that the candidate has understood the question.

Role plays need careful preparation; if incorrect cues are given by the Examiner, it is sometimes impossible for candidates to score the marks for a task. **In particular, the questions posed in the Role plays should not be modified by the Examiner, as this unfairly changes the nature of the examination.**

Candidates must be given the Role play cards in **random order** as specified in the Teachers' Notes Booklet, not 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2... The number of the card given to each candidate should be recorded in the space provided on the Summary Mark Sheet.

Centres are reminded that it is good practice for the Examiner to **read aloud the Chinese introduction** to the Role play, to set the scene.

Role plays A

First day at a new school

Quite a number of candidates thought that 今天去学校用了多长时间? was asking how long they had spent *in School*, rather than how long they took to *get to* School.

In a restaurant

This card was answered well.

A passer-by asks you the way

Weaker candidates were unable to give a plausible direction for the stadium.

Some Centres appear not to teach the idiomatic use of 到 to mean 'bus route'.

Topic Presentation & Conversation

Examiners heard some very interesting topics again this year. Many candidates chose 'My family', 'My hobby', 'Sport', 'School life' 'My future', or 'My weekend', but there were a few more adventurous choices, such as: comparing life in two different countries, leopards, global warming, recycling, technology as a double-edged sword, valuing time, the story of the Dragon-boat Festival and recounting a childhood experience.

A few candidates appeared not to have prepared a topic at all.

Centres are reminded to advise candidates not to choose 'Myself' as their topic. Where candidates choose this as their topic, it can severely limit the possibilities for General Conversation and in some cases disadvantage them.

In some Centres the opening speeches of the Topic Presentations seem to have been memorised: this type of rote learning does not allow candidates to show the full range of their ability in Chinese. Candidates should be encouraged to speak spontaneously, and not to memorise speeches.

Please note that the **Topic Presentation & Conversation should last about five minutes.** In some Centres much less time than this was allowed, and candidates were thereby disadvantaged. In a few cases the Examiner did not ask any questions after the candidate had finished the presentation. In such cases **no** marks can be awarded as the mark scheme specifically rewards **responses** to questions.

In the best Centres, the Examiner listened carefully to the candidates' presentations, and then led them skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions, allowing them both to develop their topic and to demonstrate their language skills.

Centres are reminded that they must make it clear when Topic Conversation ends and the General Conversation begins. This can be simply done by using formulae such as 现在进入第三部分。 or 现在进行自由对话吧。

General Conversation

In most cases these tests were carried out well, but in a few Centres identical questions were asked of all the candidates. Centres are reminded that it is not appropriate for all candidates to be asked the same series of questions nor for them to be expected to talk about exactly the same topics. General Conversation should be based on the individual candidates' interests and responses.

Please note that **the General Conversation should last about five minutes:** in some cases much less time than this was allowed, which did not allow candidates to show their full ability.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

The overall standard of candidates' work is to be commended. Many of the letters and also the story about what happened when a famous personality visited school used a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structure. e.g., complements of result 我考完试了, verbs followed by 得, 我们玩得很开心. They were interesting and lively to read and showed that the candidates had been very well prepared for the examination. The stories in **Question 2** were often very imaginative.

As in previous years, for each essay, the Mark Scheme was divided into marks for Relevant Communication (5 marks), Accuracy of Characters (5 marks), Accuracy of Grammar and Structures (10 marks) and Impression (5 marks).

Candidates were not penalised for writing too much. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. Therefore, a long, but less varied essay will not be awarded as many marks as a shorter one with greater variety and interest. However, candidates should be reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 150 characters they will not produce enough evidence of their ability to gain access to the highest marks.

There is no need for candidates to be unduly concerned about forgetting how to write the occasional character. The questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately left as open as possible, in order to allow candidates to make their own choice of vocabulary to use. They should, therefore, avoid embarking on topics for which they know very few of the characters involved.

Candidates should write a story which has some sort of short introduction and ending with proper paragraphing and punctuation. Letters should have an appropriate beginning and ending and be punctuated too. Punctuation and paragraphing add clarity to a piece of writing, ensuring that the Examiner does not have to 'guess' the meaning of the author.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. The majority of candidates chose the letter to their penfriend about the party; they covered all the guidelines and wrote a suitable beginning and ending to their letters, thereby achieving the full 5 marks for Relevant Communication.

- (a) Candidates wrote some good letters about the party, covering all the bullet points in excellent detail. A minority seemed to muddle 上 and 下 and so, on reading “上个星期”, wrote about a party which was still to happen. Others found when and how to use 了 hard and made mistakes with the 是...的 construction. “我是很高兴” was quite a common error and some candidates could not write high frequency words such as “因为” properly.

- (b) A much smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**. Confident candidates generally wrote well and presented convincing and well-written arguments about the topic. At the same time, only losing communication marks if they forgot to present their work in the format of a letter. Weaker candidates answered the questions with very simple sentences often just referring to themselves rather than young people in general or did not fully answer all the bullet points. Some candidates did not understand the requirements of the question so they did not use a letter format.

Question 2

This question was a creative piece, requiring candidates to describe what happened when a famous person visited their school. Some candidates were able to develop the plot from the initial given situation, and created very imaginative stories using a wide range of characters, complex and varied sentence structures. Most candidates described the visitor to the school as a 'star', but some candidates did not fully understand the question, and so described the person as a doctor or a friend's relative; in general this will have only lost them one communication mark if the rest of the story was developed. It is not intended that a misunderstanding of one character in the essay question should unduly affect a candidate's score, but nor is it intended that candidates should be able to pre-learn a story and reproduce it in the examination room. A few candidates spent too much time describing what happened before the 'star' came; the question should always be read carefully. There was some confusion over the meaning of 发生 which was a pity, as this comes up in the examination paper very regularly. A number of candidates talked about "女儿" when they meant "女孩".

Candidates, in general, wrote good stories, with the best essays really drawing the reader into the sequence of events around the visit from the 'star'. Most candidates remembered the importance of structuring their story appropriately and including a proper concluding paragraph to round off events.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary and sentence structure. Candidates should be advised not to copy out the whole question before starting their story. If they decide they must copy out the question they must not include these characters in their character count as such copied material cannot score.

General Comments on Characters and Grammar

The essays of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters.

There were a number of homophone or near homophone errors, such as candidates writing 更 instead of 跟; 开是 instead of 开始; 名子 instead of 名字; 淡淡 instead of 谈谈, 许要 when they meant 需要; 很运 when they meant 很远 etc.

Some other common character errors were 以后, 知道 and 因为.

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. The most frequent problems were:

1. Confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地 – although this had improved over previous years.
2. Candidates found it hard to use 了 correctly. Most candidates were able to use 了 correctly some of the time, but not all the time.
3. There was too much use of 在 before time phrases.
4. There was an overuse of 是 when it was not needed (i.e. when there was no particular emphasis intended), as in 我是很忙, 我是很好
5. Some candidates should try to reduce the use of 有 when referring to a past timeframe i.e. 有做什么.

6. Some Anglicisation occurred, e.g. as in 我 '做' 了两个朋友 for 'I made two friends' or 学校 for 'I want to eat at school'. These kinds of errors are the result of literal translation of English into Chinese.