

MANDARIN CHINESE SHORT COURSE

Paper 1341/01
Speaking

Key messages

- For the Prepared Topic, candidates should choose a topic that is of interest to them and which they are able to talk about with the language they have at their disposal
- Candidates should prepare for the Topic Conversation by anticipating the kinds of questions an interested layperson might ask about their chosen topic
- Candidates need to be prepared to develop their answers for both straightforward and more challenging questions.

Comments

There are two parts to this examination – **Section 1** is a Prepared Topic and Topic Conversation and **Section 2** is a General Conversation. The Prepared Topic is marked out of 15 with 10 marks for Content/Presentation and 5 marks for Language. The Topic Discussion and the General Conversation are each marked out of 15 with 5 marks for Comprehension and Responsiveness and 10 marks for Accuracy and Range of Language. In addition, 15 marks are awarded globally for Pronunciation/Intonation (5 marks) and Feel for Language (10 marks). This gives a total of 60 marks.

The Speaking examination is scheduled to last between 12-15 minutes. The Prepared Topic/ Topic Conversation should last 5-7 minutes and the general conversation should last 6-8 minutes. Examiners should keep to this time schedule.

At the beginning of each recording on the CD or cassette, Examiners should announce the Syllabus code, level, language and session (1341 Pre-U Mandarin Chinese Short Course May 2014), cassette number (if relevant), Centre number and name, date and Examiner name (this information should be saved as a single separate file named 'introduction' in the case of CDs). At the beginning of each test, a candidate's number and name should be recorded. As the recordings will be listened to by a Moderator, the recording volume needs to be checked by the centre in advance. As candidates usually speak more quietly than the Examiner, the microphone should be positioned to favour the candidates. There should be no significant background noise on the recording.

The Speaking Examination is the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate what s/he can do; the practice and preparation before the examination should focus on this. Topics should be carefully chosen; a topic should interest the candidate, but also be well within their reach to talk about with the language the candidate has at his/her disposal. Where this does not happen, a carefully prepared presentation can sound somewhat stilted and a candidate can be left rather exposed if s/he is then unable to engage in the Topic Conversation. The candidate should not necessarily cover all aspects of the topic, but might choose to leave one or two obvious things out which can be picked up by the Examiner in the Topic Conversation.

The Examiner should try to make the transition clear between the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation to the candidate. Wherever possible, they should also make the move clear between topic areas within the General Conversation too. Clear indication of movement between topics will help to avoid any comprehension confusion in the General conversation for the candidate too. Teachers are encouraged to practise this with candidates before the examination. The sentences suggested to be used by the Examiner are 你今天讲什么题目? and 现在我们讲一讲其他的题目, 好不好?

Candidates have time during the year to work on their Prepared Topic and should be able present fairly fluently, with practice. This initial presentation should last a maximum of 2 minutes. Once the candidate has presented for the 2 minutes, the Examiner should intervene so that the conversation can take place. Whilst tones and pronunciation are not expected to be perfect, the presentation should be easily understood by a sympathetic native speaker; candidates should have a good feel for the rhythms and cadences of the

language within the sentences. If, for any reason – e.g. nerves/hesitancy - the presentation lasts longer than 2 minutes, Examiners should not then shorten the Topic Conversation to compensate, as this will reduce the time available to the candidate to demonstrate what s/he can do and may affect his/her marks for this part of the test.

Short Course Examiners will have become used to understanding their own candidates and making allowances for their errors. However, candidates should be reminded they also need to be understood by the Moderator listening to the recording of their test. It is very natural for the Examiner to want to correct or help the Candidate, but this must be avoided. It is also tempting for an Examiner who knows the Candidate well to say too much him/herself during the examination, by way of response, and again, this should be avoided. Candidates will score highly on the Prepared Topic when they also demonstrate they have prepared well both in the content of the material presented, and in terms of the vocabulary and the structures used – e.g. good use of conjunctions, correct word order and timeframes etc.

In all cases, the best conversations ensue when the Examiner asks the candidates open-ended questions to which the candidate can respond on a variety of levels, depending on ability. Teachers can prepare candidates for this with the Examiner playing the part of the intelligent layperson in the Topic Conversation and should be genuinely interested to talk with the candidate about the Prepared Topic. Candidates' preparation should therefore centre on anticipating and preparing for the general kinds of questions which could be asked by an interested layperson. For the Topic Conversation pre-learnt responses should be avoided as the Moderators will be listening for a real conversation. For the General Conversation, although sample questions are suggested in the syllabus, it is expected that Examiners will not take the majority of questions directly from this list, although those they choose will be of a similar standard. Candidates should therefore have developed during the course of their study the vocabulary and linguistic skills to answer a range of questions both on their Topic Presentation and during the General Conversation.

The Examiner should keep the flow of conversation going in as relaxed a manner as possible. Candidates need to be prepared for straightforward questions, but also ones which will stretch them. Examiners must ensure that they do provide stretching questions, for all abilities of candidates, to give them the opportunity to demonstrate the full extent of their range for an examination at this level. As well as taking part in a conversation, they need to regard the examination as an opportunity to showcase what they can do. This will then maximise their chances of obtaining good marks with a natural, responsive conversation showing good use of vocabulary, structures and idiom. At this level, candidates should be encouraged to develop their answers, even if they are asked a very straightforward question. Candidates should not worry if they do not understand a question but should ask for it to be repeated or rephrased (this request should be made in Chinese). If they still do not understand it, the Examiner will move swiftly on to another question.

The Speaking examination is led by the Examiner, but the candidate should be doing most of the talking and the Examiner will need to be flexible enough to adapt questioning to a candidate's line of thought, so that a proper conversation ensues. If a candidate has areas of a topic where s/he feels particularly confident, it is up to him or her to try to respond to questions in such a way as to be able to demonstrate this to the Examiner. Candidates should not worry that their answer to a question is factually untrue or does not really reflect what they think; the Examiner is only interested in the level of their Chinese and will not judge them on what they think.

Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese is an examination for foreign language learners. Therefore, native speakers of Mandarin who have a well-prepared topic may, in all likelihood, score maximum marks. However, it is the standard required for the foreign language learner which should be borne in mind by the Examiner as the testing and marking of candidates takes place.

MANDARIN CHINESE (SHORT COURSE)

Paper 1341/02
Chinese Culture

Comments

Candidates are required to answer one question for this paper, either from the Topics in Chinese Culture section or from Chinese Literature and Film. The topic is marked out of 30 with a mark out of 25 for Content and a mark out of 5 for Structure. In all cases, questions are open to interpretation; it is up to the candidates to develop an analytical response to the question with clear, specific examples/evidence (not generalized statements) to back up his/her argument. The mark scheme gives some indicative content for each question on the paper. However, there is often no right or wrong way to answer a question; it is up to the candidate to develop an argument and find evidence to support it.

There were some very successful essays which demonstrated in-depth analysis backed up by specific reference.

Candidates should make sure they read the question very carefully before they start, making a careful assessment of what is asked for. They should write a plan before beginning to write.

The essay should start with an introduction which should outline how the question is going to be tackled; giving away the conclusion in the introduction to the essay should be avoided. Subsequent paragraphs should develop a clear argument/line of thinking with specific, relevant examples/evidence to illustrate the argument, which should always link to the question and essays should finish with a strong conclusion.

Essays should not be a descriptive list of facts or the story of what happened in a period of history, a novel or a film. Candidates obviously need to have a lot of facts at their fingertips, but then need to be in a position to manipulate those facts to demonstrate their deeper understanding and analytical capability in response to the question. Evaluation is the key. Organisation of material is vital and an appropriate style should be used.

In order to be able to respond to these essay questions appropriately, candidates need to be exposed during their studies to a range of commentaries/view points about a particular topic and to have had the opportunity to discuss ideas with their teachers and other candidates to inform their interpretation of events or their interpretation of a book or film. It is only this exposure to a variety of views that will give candidates the ability to handle these essay questions with sufficient analysis. For the Chinese literature and film section, candidates need to have a reasonable knowledge of the period in which the work they are writing about was set.

Comments on specific questions:

Question 1

- (a) This question was done well by many candidates. The best responses gave a detailed and balanced discussion of the role of the peasantry, with many examples to support their argument for or against their playing a crucial role. These essays generally also included analysis of other important factors contributing to the Chinese Communist Party's ultimate victory over the Japanese and the Guomindang as part of the construction of an argument as to the extent of the relationship with the peasantry being fundamental to victory for the Chinese Communist Party. Less able candidates showed some confusion in the chronology: it would be helpful for candidates to draw up their own time-lines to clarify the complex events in this period of Chinese history.
- (b) This question was answered less successfully, with candidates sometimes focussing on other events in the period in question rather than discussing issues specifically relating to education.

Question 2

- (a) There were some very good responses to this question, showing detailed knowledge and analysis.
- (b) Although there were some good responses, this question required at least some 'economic/semi-technical' understanding of China's energy needs to be answered fully, and some candidates did not have sufficient depth of knowledge to make an effective argument.

Question 3

- (a) This was a less popular choice of question. A good answer required knowledge of Mao's views on population and an ability to relate these to population policy during the period in question.
- (b) There were some good, detailed responses to this question, showing a broad range of knowledge about pollution issues in China. The best answers went beyond simply reciting the various pollution issues to a discussion of how pollution can be controlled, including the measures the Chinese government has already taken.

Question 4

- (a) There were some good answers, but some did not give enough detailed examples to support their argument.
- (b) Candidates seemed to find this question more straightforward to tackle than **Question (a)**, with good examples from the text.

Question 5

- (a) Generally this was answered well, with candidates clearly engaging with Ma Jian and his complex personality. His contradictory character lent itself well to a balanced argument which some candidates achieved impressively well.
- (b) This question was not usually answered so successfully as **Question 5(a)**. Answers needed to be carefully backed up by specific reference to the text.

Question 6

- (a) There were some excellent, thoughtful responses to this question, combining discussion of "fate" with references to the story, the characters and the cinematography. A useful starting point might have been to define "fate" and to distinguish it (as some candidates did) from tradition. The best responses also showed an awareness both of the historical setting of the film itself and the political climate of the time when the film was first released in China.
- (b) The idea of "disconnect" seemed to puzzle some candidates, but the best responses showed real sympathy with and understanding of Gu Qing's situation. The cinematographic references sometimes showed impressive sensitivity and thoughtfulness, relating the physical environment to the colour palate of the film and the director's subtle messages concerning Gu Qing's role and its inherent contradictions.