

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCSE

GCSE Chinese (1666/1667)

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Paper 1 - Listening and Responding

Overall the standard of entry was good. The marks were higher than in last year. Examiners were particularly encouraged to see the continued improvement in the performance of learner candidates.

The vast majority of candidates did well for questions 1 to 8. Over one third of learner candidates from home centres also scored highly between 35 to full marks (40) on this section. Examiners noted that some of these learner candidates had written the pinyin or English meaning next to the picture cues, possibly during the five-minute reading time. This was evidence that they were properly trained to use the preparation time to go through the visual cues, and were aware of what was looking for with individual questions before the playing of the tape.

The last question targeted at the A and A* grade and required candidates to answer in English. Examiners noted a slight improvement in candidate performance in general, although it was still the section that most candidates lost marks.

Question 1

All candidates made a good start to the examination and scored well although a minority of candidates confused '雞蛋/鸡蛋' with '雞/鸡' and lost mark.

Question 2

Generally performed well but some weaker candidates mixed up '動物/动物' and '博物/博物' and lost marks for both (iii) and (v).

Question 3

This question was well attempted by all candidates across the ability range. The topic matter was generally well understood. 'Credit card' was tested for the first time in this paper but the majority responded well. Occasional problems occurred with '七月一日' and '十月一日' in part (iii) for some candidates who possibly found the initials for 7 and 10 very close.

Question 4

This was a good question. Parts (i) and (ii) proved accessible for all candidates, while (iii) (iv) and (v) required candidates to show ability to listen for the gist of longer and more complex sentences. It was (iii) and (iv) that had invited more incorrect answers from weaker candidates who more often made the wrong decision between D and E. Part (v) was more confidently answered with only a very tiny number of candidates opted for 'C' (the boys) instead of the correct answer 'F' (the babies).

Question 5

Generally well attempted, but examiners were surprised to find learner candidates at grade D and lower responding less confidently on (i) and (ii) despite both being a familiar topic on 'school subjects' that had been used frequently on previous years.

Question 6

Generally well attempted with only a tiny number of candidates confused '電影/电影' with '電腦/电脑' or not able to identify '家具'

Question 7

Many average and able candidates scored full marks on this question. Weak candidates still managed to score at least one or two marks on (i) and (ii) but obviously found (iv) and (v) very demanding, as both required the ability to listen for more than single key words.

Question 8

This question posed no problems for most candidates. '吸塵/吸尘' was better known this time compared to year 2005 when it first occurred.

Question 9

In general the majority of candidates across all ability made an encouraging attempt. Some candidates still tended to give several alternatives in their responses to some of the questions. Again it would be advisable to bring to candidates' attention that (1) giving alternatives in their answers indicates indecision. Marks could not be awarded to an answer that exhibits indecision and (2) any additional detail that negates would render the answer irrelevant and lead to the loss of marks.

Candidates are also advised to read the questions to allow themselves some ideas of what to look for before listening to the dialogues.

- (a) This was a question set to encourage all candidates to take part. Whilst responded well by the majority, some candidates used 'GCSE' or 'year 7' as a substitute of 'secondary school' and lost mark.
- (b) Again a question with relatively simple theme set to encourage weaker candidates to take part. The majority responded well but a noticeable small number of candidates relied on guessing and gave various incorrect answers such as '3 months', '1 year' etc.
- (c) Most candidates scored at least one mark by successfully identifying one of the reasons as 'making new friends'. But some wrote 'meeting friends' and failed to convey the meaning precisely. A few average candidates picked up the idea of different cultures but failed to gain a mark due to wrong spelling or not being able to phrase their answers sufficiently clearly.

- (d) A fair number of candidates did pick out the correct details for (i) but some were unable to transfer them into English accurately and meaningfully. Part (ii) was mainly answered correctly in terms of the mark scheme. Candidates who wrote 'if Chinese are in the same class, they will speak Chinese to each other' would render the answer inadequate.
- (e) Some candidates had difficulties conveying the concept of 'family' in their answer and led to the loss of mark.
- (f) '洗澡' (taking bath or shower) caused problems for many candidates.
- (g) Pleasingly done, but some candidates had not paid attention to full detail and rendered the answer incomplete by leaving out 'confidence'.

Paper 2 - Speaking

The requirements of this paper with regard to the topic areas, assessment guidelines and criterion are similar to last years'. The overall performance of candidates was good. It was pleasing to see an increasing number of candidates and improving performance from the non-native speakers who were well prepared and demonstrated good language skills.

Comments on Candidates' performance

Majority of candidates performed well in this examination and achieved good grades. Many of them managed to convey their ideas and opinions with appropriate lexis and structures. Those who achieved higher grades normally demonstrated their language abilities in a genuine interactive conversation with the teacher-examiner. However, some candidates, mostly native speakers, engaged themselves in fluent and descriptive monologues without any language interactions with the teacher-examiner, hence failed to achieve higher grades. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that "Language is for communication", and in the case of speaking, "interaction" should supersede "language skills" and "fluency". Merits were given to those candidates who demonstrated their competence in manipulating the language skills through interactions with the teacher-examiner.

It was discovered that candidates from some centres came up with identical structured answers to some questions e.g. questions on school environment, favourites, and activities.

Some candidates, mostly Native speakers, failed to achieve better grades due to the following errors, some of which were replicas from the past years:

- Candidates gave a monologue in topic 1, some even extended to topics 2 & 3 without any interactive conversations with the teacher-examiner.
- "Question & answer" mode rather than interactive conversations
- Not responsive enough - just give one or two words without expansion or opinions. Some elaboration would have enhanced the scores.

Some weaker candidates, mostly real learners, achieved lower grades as they were not well prepared for the examination, e.g. insufficient vocabulary on describing people, places or events. Some even failed to understand terminologies, e.g. "Part-time job" [兼職 / 兼 ▪], "family relationship" [家人關係 / 家人 ▪ 系], "savings" [儲蓄 / ▪ 蓄] which were found in the core vocabulary bank.

Comments on Administration

The administration of some centres mostly non-teaching ones remained a problem severely affecting the candidates' achievement. All centres are urged to note and avoid the following mistakes:

- Topic 1 was chosen by the Candidate, and he / she was allowed to give a talk up to 1 minute on the topic chosen. Then the teacher-examiner had to intervene and carry out an interactive conversation basing on the contents spoken. Some teacher-examiners allowed candidate to carry on with the monologue, hence candidates were deprived of chances to demonstrate their interactive language abilities
- Topic 2 & 3 were to be chosen by the teacher-examiner from a pre-allocated sequence list found in the Examiner's Handbook. Centre Administrations should allow teacher-examiners aware of this list before the test.
- LT3 form - It should be downloaded from the Edexcel Website, one for each candidate, with their topics written down. No duplicates are required
- Timing - The majority well timed and evenly distributed the 8 - 12 minutes among 3 topics. However, there were still a few centres which were found not conforming to the guidelines. Some centres were found to allocate 6 minutes or less for all 3 topics. The insufficient timing would affect candidates' performance and score.
- "Reading" out questions from the examiner's handbook rather than "asking" questions orally.
- Lack of competence in using Cantonese / Mandarin by teacher-examiners or candidates often caused communication problems and affected candidates' performance. As suggested in the previous years, candidates should be tested in the dialect (Cantonese / Mandarin) they were prepared for.

Comment on the topics

Topic A - In the UK & Abroad

- Candidates generally answered well on weather, home-town and trips abroad with detailed description related to personal experience. Many were well prepared for the additional higher questions on "If you had a lot of money, where would you like to go? Why" and came up with very interesting answers.
- Not many candidates from the home centres gave good description on the questions related to "Places of interest in your area" and "Festival celebration" which reflected both their general and cultural knowledge
- There were some confusion in the past tense (去了) and future (會去 / 会去) in description of trips. Some just used the present tense [去] in all occasions.

Topic B - Education, Training & Employment

- Questions on school life, timetable, subjects and uniform were rather straight forward, and the majority of candidates managed to give detailed answers.
- Questions on : “Part-time job” [兼職 / 兼 ▪], “future plans” [將來計劃 / 將來 ▪ 划], “work experience” [工作經驗 / 工作 ▪ ▪] remained problems to some candidates who were weaker in the appropriate knowledge and language skills for expression.

Topic C - House, Home & Daily Routine

- This appeared to be the most favourite topic chosen by candidates, and most of them did well on sub-topics such as description of their houses / rooms, family members, routines, likes & dislikes.
- Questions on “housework” [家務 / 家 ▪], “family relationship” [家人關係 / 家人 ▪ 系] were not well answered. Many candidates just gave the answer “washing up”, or “getting on very well” without elaborating the answers.

Topic D - Media & Social Activities

- This topic was less favourably answered. Many of those who attempted this topic managed to give the names of their favourites on hobbies, music, TV Programs, books etc. Not many candidates gave elaboration or opinions to their answers.
- The questions on “savings” [儲蓄 / ▪ 蓄] and “famous people” [名人] continued to be problematic for some candidates. Not many candidates came up with good answers.

As in the previous years, it was noted that the teacher-examiner played an important part in the assessment. Apart from monitoring the timing and topics in the examination, teacher-examiners were also responsible to carry out a genuine interaction with the candidates and played the part of interlocutor in the conversations. Centres and teacher-examiners are strongly advised to note and follow the examination guidelines when conducting the speaking test so as to give candidates a favourable chance to achieve their best grades.

Paper 3: Reading and Responding

On the whole, candidates performed well on this paper, with a majority scoring high marks. Candidates exhibited the same high standard of reading comprehension as in previous years. Even the last question, which tested candidates' bilingual skills, was well answered by most candidates.

Question 1:

A straightforward vocabulary testing question was attempted successfully by almost all candidates.

Questions 2, 3 and 4:

Candidates responded well to these questions as the passages herein were relatively short and the topic areas such as school subjects, holiday and weather were familiar to candidates. For Question 2, some careless candidates chose 'C' which had already been used in the example for (ii) 'science', thereby losing a mark. For Question 3 (iv), a few candidates either just gave one answer (instead of two as two marks allocated here required) or mistook 'riding a bike' for 'riding a horse'. Perhaps they could only recognise one word 'ride'.

Questions 5 and 6:

Discriminated very well, but were attempted with varying degrees of success. Question 5 required inference skills. Candidates needed to match their interests with the sections of the magazine they would like to read. Most parts were answered very well, except Q5 (iii) 'You are interested in playing football' which should match with 'sports news'. However, some candidates matched this with 'how to keep fit'.

Question 6:

Required candidates to take into consideration the syntax of the sentences while filling in blanks. For instance, the word 'river' should go with the unit word '一條'; many candidates filled in 'trees' instead. A significant number of candidates reversed their answers to (vi) and (vii). For Q6 (vi), it required an adverb '認真' to describe the verb 'teach' and for Q6 (vii), it required an adjective '友好' to describe the subject 'classmates'.

Question 7:

Most candidates scored well on this question, with a few missing one or two marks.

Question 8:

Was another good discriminator. Some weak candidates could not read '乾燥' (dry), thereby linking with (v). Instead they ticked (vi) 'People in the Antarctica cannot go swimming'. Some ticked (viii) as a correct answer, unable to infer that if there were no roads or cars, there could not be any traffic jam.

Question 9:

Required answers in English and was very well attempted by the majority of candidates this year. Many scored 6 marks or above. For Q9 (c), a number of candidates could not render Yaoming's parents' profession into correct English. Answers varied from basketball coach, basketball manager to wild guesses such as teachers, doctors or shopkeepers. For Question 9 (e) some candidates only gave a partial answer 'he could not play' rather than 'he could not play in many matches', or did not give a precise answer, eg 'he did not go to matches.'

For Question 9 (h), the majority had no problem giving 'reading' and 'listening to music' as the two correct answers. For those who chose 'playing computer games', some had difficulty in translating this into correct English. They wrote 'playing electronic toys' or 'digital games' as an answer.

Paper 4: Writing

Overall candidates performed well and displayed the same high standard of writing as in previous years.

For candidates of Chinese origin, whose English was weak, the English rubric in Questions 1 and 3 and bullet points in Question 3 continued to pose considerable difficulty, which resulted in them writing about something completely different from what was required, and thereby losing marks. Some weak candidates who could not answer Q2 in Chinese used *pinyin* instead. Candidates are again reminded that the inclusion of *pinyin* is only allowed in a continuous piece of writing in Q3 and 4, but not in Q1 and 2.

Question 1:

An open-end question, which was accessible even to the weakest candidates. The majority were able to write five things they wanted to take with them for a weekend going away. As mentioned above, some candidates of Chinese origin did not comprehend the English rubric and wrote something completely different, eg the places they had visited or the activities they had undertaken. Others included people such as their friends and family, rather than things, in their list they wanted to take with them.

Question 2:

The pictures were very clear and most candidates were able to follow their guidance and score high marks. For Q2 (iii), Some candidates forgot to include 'in the evening' or 'at night' in their answer, ignoring the picture of a starry night sky.

Question 3:

Most candidates tackled this question well. Surprisingly a large number of candidates struggled to write the words 'thank you' in Chinese correctly. Some did not mention specifically what they enjoyed most. Rather they described how they felt about the holiday. A sizable number of candidates did not read the last bullet point carefully. Instead of inviting the family to visit them, they asked whether they could go back to visit the family again. Also some candidates did not mention the specific time 'next year'; they just said 'next time'. A few candidates, again of Chinese origin, failed to understand the English rubric. They wrote an essay about a holiday rather than a thank you note.

Question 4:

This question served as a good discriminator. Able candidates attempted this question successfully, employing a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures to describe when and how they met their best friends, their interests and why they liked them, covering all bullet points. They also benefited from the use of bullet points, which ensured that their writings were well-ordered and logically constructed. Some weaker candidates did not recognise the words '認識' and '興趣'. They either failed to cover the second and third bullet points or included some pre-learned materials such as the appearance or personality of their best friends. Many candidates did not explain how they met their best friends as required in Bullet Point 2. A few candidates turned the bullet points into questions and answers rather than linking their writing into a continuous piece of composition. Again as in previous years, those who used *pinyin* in this and Question 3 did not mark it with the correct tones nor did their romanisation always follow the *pinyin* system.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1666

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	88	78	68	58	49	41	33	25	0

(NB each paper is worth 25% of the total)

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1667

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	88	78	68	58	50	42	34	26	0

(NB each paper is worth 33% of the total)

Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 1 grade boundaries	50	45	40	35	31	26	21	16	11	0

Paper 2 Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	20	19	16	13	11	9	7	6	5	0

Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 3 grade boundaries	50	44	39	34	30	25	20	16	12	0

Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 4 grade boundaries	55	47	41	35	30	27	24	21	18	0

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