

GCSE

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Chinese(1666/1667)

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Examiners' Report

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Paper 1 - Listening and Responding

Candidates generally performed well across the paper. There were few very low scores, showing that they were familiar with the specification and the list of minimum core vocabulary. The last question which required candidates to answer in English proved to be demanding but also a good differentiator.

Question 1:

Well answered but a small number of candidates ticked the detractor D (basketball) rather than the correct answer A (tennis), possibly they had wrongly associated ‘網/网’(net) with the ‘basket’ in the visual cue for D.

Question 2:

Some candidates ticked G (cassette) while the correct one was E (CD). A small number also opted for visual cue D (passport) while the correct answer was C (camera), suggesting some guesswork on the part of candidates who only recognized the phonetic element ‘照’.

Question 3:

This question was generally well attempted. The majority of candidates were familiar with the list of core vocabulary regarding different types of jobs. Some weaker candidates confused 14 and 17 in Q3(i). This could be because the initials for 4 and 7 are very close.

Question 4:

This question was very well answered by all candidates across the ability range.

Question 5:

This question was well attempted but Q5(iv), (v) and (vi) were more accurately answered than Q5(i), (ii) and (iii). Q5(i) was about direction, which always caused problems for some candidates. Weaker candidates in their response to part (iii) again tended to rely on the phonetic element ‘舞’ and ticked ‘dance’ rather than ‘lion dance’ (舞獅 / 舞獅 and 舞蹈). ‘Dragon boat race’ and ‘lion dance’ seemed unfamiliar to a number of candidates, highlighting the need to embed aspects of culture in teaching and learning. There were also a few others who opted for the wrong answer C (太極拳/太极拳), which would suggest that the candidates were not listening.

Question 6:

A very straightforward question but some candidates ticked more answers than the 3 required. This could be evidence of weaker candidates who had mistaken ‘morning’, ‘afternoon’, and ‘evening’ as among the items to be identified; as a consequence, some relied on guessing and ticked as many as 6.

Question 7:

The topic and source proved appropriately challenging to weaker candidates but was generally well tackled.

Question 8:

Generally well attempted but examiners were surprised to find some weaker candidates not being able to recognize ‘panda’ and ‘Great Wall’ as the two correct answers for Q8(i). Q8(iii) posed no difficulties.

Question 9:

This question targeted A and A* and demanded a higher level of precision and detail. In general the majority of candidates across all ability made an encouraging attempt and a broad range of marks was scored. A very limited few gave answers in Chinese and as a result scored no marks. Some candidates tended to give several alternatives in their responses to some of the questions. It would be advisable to bring to candidates' attention that (1) 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.

- (a) This was mainly answered correctly, though some just put down a single figure '6' (or single word 'six') and rendered the answer inadequate.
- (b) Most candidates coped well with this question but some omitted one part of the question and did not give answer to either 'who' or 'why'. Some candidates who used first person in their response would render the answer not meaningful and lost marks.
- (c) A fair number of candidates were able to establish the reason correctly. Some candidates, either did not fully understand or misheard the text, missed out 'in China', thus the answer became simply 'a job (anywhere) that required the language'. Others suggested 'convenience' or 'communication' rather than 'getting a job'. Both were not awarded the 1 mark. Candidate who wrote a combination of answers eg 'can get a Chinese job/job in China/job amongst Chinese people' also lost mark.
- (d) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly though some had difficulty spelling 'remember' and thus failed to score. A small number of candidates put down 'otherwise she will forget' as the answer, presumably thinking that 'helped to remember' entailed such meaning, but was wrong and led to loss of mark.
- (e) The number of candidates who failed to score on part (i) was larger than expected. The most common errors include 'garden' and 'China'. Others include 'office', 'factory' or 'hospital', suggesting that candidates constructed the answer based on the phonetic element 'gong' or 'yuan'. On part (ii), a significant number of candidates were not able to gain full marks. Some was only able to identify one piece of detail. Others gave rather imprecise answers, eg 'making friends and discuss Chinese with them', without making clear if Pramiila was making friends with Chinese or if she discussed about Chinese topics using English.
Some candidates did not read the questions well and put down answers in the incorrect section. Some wrote 'China' as the answer to (i), though mentioned 'park' in the answer to (ii), they would not be awarded the 1 mark for (i). Others in their answer to (i) included all the details for both sections and then invented something not in the text for (ii). Again, candidates would lose the 2 marks for (ii).
- (f) Again a significant number of candidates only scored 1 mark for not being able to identify both points. Most problems were encountered with the point 'mother was happy'. Some candidates were not sure if it was 'mother' or 'Pramiila' who was happy. Others invented answers eg. mother feeling 'proud' or 'sad' (for various reasons such as 'to see her leaving home to China' etc.) - highlighting the need to go beyond key words and the necessity to listen for gist., understand the overall concept of the text.

Paper 2 - Speaking

The requirements of this paper with regard to the topics, suggested questions, timing & assessment criterion are similar to previous years'. The overall performance of candidates was very good. There seemed to be an increase of candidates from the non-native speakers, and their performance varied from the top to lower ranges, depending on how well they were prepared.

Comments on Candidates' performance

Candidates were generally well prepared for this exam. Many of them managed to convey their ideas and opinions with appropriate lexis and structures. Some even initiated interchange with the teacher-examiner by asking questions such as:

“Have you tried /seen / read /... this, teacher? Do you like it?”

“老師，您有沒有看 / 聽 / 讀過 ____ ？您喜歡嗎？”

“老师，您有没有看 / 听 / 读过 ____ ？您喜欢吗？”

These candidates scored very high marks by demonstrating their competence in manipulating the language efficiently.

It was also discovered that some candidates were so well prepared that they were able to give a fluent and well-structured narrative immediately after the question was asked, e.g. questions on uniform, school environment, facilities. Some answers were identical. However examiners would appreciate candidates' own answers which reflected their views and abilities more than pre-learnt ones. Extra merits would be given to language showing individuality rather than fluency in the narration.

There were some discrepancies found in the candidates' performance, some of which were replicas from 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 and opinions. Some elaboration would have enhanced the scores
- Insufficient vocabulary on describing people, places or events. Some even failed to understand terminologies, e.g. “season” [季節 / 季 ▪], “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

- 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

- The choice of topic 2 & 3 by the teacher-examiner changed from the remaining 3 topics areas to a pre-allocated sequence list found on Pg 16 in the Examiner's Handbook. It seems few examiners were aware of the change. However, candidates were not penalised on the wrong choice of topics 2 & 3 in this year's exam, but teacher-examiners are advised to follow the sequence list when choosing topics 2 & 3 for their candidates in future tests.
- 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 only 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

All 4 topics were well attempted by candidates. The following questions are well answered:

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Topic D - Media & Social Activities**
Many candidates managed to give the names of their favourites including hobbies, music, TV Programs, books etc.

Some problems were found in the following areas:

- **Topic A- In the UK & Abroad**
 - 1 Some candidates did not know the terms "season" [季節 / 季节], "on holiday" [渡假], "Souvenir" [紀念品], "country" [鄉村 / 乡村], "town" [城市] and failed to answer the questions
 - 2 Questions on "Where did you go on holiday last year?" and "Where are you going on holiday this year" involve different tenses. Some candidates mixed up the past tense [去了] and the future one [會去 / 会去], and some just used the present tense [去] in all occasions.

3 Not many candidates gave good description on the questions related to “Places of interest in your area” [遊客可以去的好地方 / 游客可以去的好地方] and “Festival celebration” [節日慶祝 / 节日庆祝] which reflected both their general and cultural knowledge.

➤ Topic B - Education, Training & Employment

Some candidates failed to answer questions on : “school facilities” [學校設施 / 学校设施], “Part-time job” [兼職 / 兼职], “future plans” [將來計劃 / 将来计划], “work experience” [工作經驗 / 工作经验] , because of not understanding the terms or not having the appropriate knowledge / experience.

➤ Topic C - House, Home & Daily Routine

Questions on “housework” [家務 / 家务] , “family relationship” [家人關係 / 家人关系] were not answered for the same reasons as Topic B.

➤ Topic D - Media & Social Activities

This topic was comparatively less favourably answered. Not many candidates gave elaboration or opinions to their answers apart from the names of their favourites.

The questions on “savings” [儲蓄 / 储蓄] and “famous people” [名人] continued to be problematic, reasons being the same as topic B. Sometimes English words were used, and they were acceptable only when no appropriate / corresponding Chinese translation available, e.g. names of Celebrities, Music or books, or commonly used items such as “CD” “DCD”. Where equivalent Chinese translations such as “college” [學院/学院] , “singer” [歌星] are available, candidates should give their answers in Chinese.

It was noted that the performance of 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. Some even gave extra help when candidates did not understand certain questions / terms by re-framing the questions or asked another question-type to help candidates move on. This eased candidates’ anxiety and they generally managed to answer the following questions well. This is a good practice worth sharing among all teacher-examiners.

Paper 3 - Reading and Responding

Overall, candidates did well in this year's exam, exhibiting a high standard of reading comprehension. It was also noted that there was a marked improvement in the performance of learners, which in turn shows the accessibility of the paper.

Q1: Shopping and Q5: After School Activities: These topics were familiar to candidates. They responded very well, with most scoring full marks.

Q2: Housework: Most did well, with a few not able to recognise '剪草' as cutting grass.

Q3: School timetable: Although the topic was familiar, some candidates could not read the questions and therefore failed to give the correct answers. A number of candidates ticked '2' rather than '4' periods for Q3(ii), presumably not realising '上午' extended to midday rather than the morning break.

Q4: Weekend activities: tested candidates' understanding of lexical items and almost all candidates scored full marks.

Q6: Newspaper headings, and Q8: Youth angst were good discriminators and they differentiated well. Q6 required candidates to match headings with their contents and Q8 required candidates to match problems with appropriate recommendations. This involved inference skills. For Q6, some candidates chose (G) for (v), mistaking 'the latest computer exhibition' as an 'advertisement', rather than 'technology' and leaving 'lost cat' with no answer. For Q8, a number of candidates lost marks by choosing 'Revising with friends will help' as a recommendation for 'having no friends' and 'Go dancing' for the problem of 'feeling under great pressure because of the oncoming examinations'.

Q7: School rules: A number of candidates did not read the rubric carefully. Instead of matching texts to pictures, they simply ticked the pictures and thereby lost all four marks.

Q9(a): Most candidates included the 'warm' notion in their answer; weaker candidates could not read '乾燥' as dry.

Q9(b) was well answered.

Q9(c): A large number of candidates could not render '划船' (rowing) into correct English. '北海公園' posed difficulty for weaker candidates who simply called it 'Beijing Park'. Many could not spell 'panda' accurately either.

Q9(d): Responses were varied. Most could score one mark out of two by either saying that Beijing is a historical city or it is a modern city. Again many could not spell 'modern' correctly.

Paper 4 - Writing

Candidates generally performed well in this paper, exhibiting a high standard of writing. Examiners were particularly encouraged to see an increasing number of learners who took the examination scoring good marks. For those whose English was weak, the English rubric and bullet points in Q3 posed considerable difficulty, which resulted in them writing about something completely different from what was required and thereby losing marks. Some weaker candidates who could not answer Q1 and 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.

Q1: This question tested candidates' ability to fill in a simple questionnaire. While most candidates had no problem in giving appropriate answers, some were unable to recognise the words 'nationality' and 'gender'. They gave a variety of answers such as Shanghai, London and Beijing for 'nationality' and age for 'gender', despite both of these words being included in the Core Vocabulary List.

Q2: This question required candidates to complete sentences which described David's house, using the pictures to guide them as well as taking into consideration the syntax of the sentences when filling in blanks. Most candidates did well. However many candidates failed to interpret the pictures of various rooms in a house. They were expected to give names of rooms, but instead they wrote names of items of furniture in each room. A number of candidates did not know the direction in Q2(a). Some could not tell that a smiley face in Q2(e) indicated approval or contentment. They thought it was a person and answers such as 'my father' or 'my elder brother with a smile' resulted. They also failed to recognise that the position of the blank in this sentence required the use of a verb.

Q3: This question was well tackled, with most candidates covering all the bullet points. A few misunderstood 'the reason(s) why you cannot attend' as 'the reason(s) why you did not pay attention in class'. Many candidates did not realise that the question required reference to future time, not past. Surprisingly, a sizeable number of candidates could not write 'homework' correctly.

Q4: Overall, candidates did well in this question, responding to each bullet point using simple but clear language. Some strong candidates displayed a very high standard of writing, elaborating on a wide range of topics they chose for the speech competition, eg filial piety, Confucius, Chinese traditional festivals, a comparison between the East and the West, the preservation of the environment, the Great Wall of China and so on. A small minority were unable to attempt the question. Those who used *pinyin* in this and the previous question 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 | 79 | 72 | 65 | 58 | 49 | 40 | 31 | 22 | 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 | 82 | 74 | 66 | 59 | 49 | 40 | 31 | 22 | 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 | 42 | 38 | 34 | 31 | 26 | 21 | 16 | 11 | 0 |

Paper 4 Writing

| Grade | Max. Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | U |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Paper 4 grade boundaries | 55 | 41 | 37 | 33 | 29 | 24 | 20 | 16 | 12 | 0 |

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