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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Chinese (5CN01) Paper 1F
Listening & Understanding in Chinese

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GCSE Chinese 2018

Unit 1F: Listening

Examiner's report

Introduction

This year's Foundation Listening paper should not have held too many surprises for a well-prepared candidate; on the whole, the topics tested (and the vocabulary within those topics) were such that one could reasonably expect a good overall score to be achieved. To give just a few examples: everyday objects (Q1), school subjects (Q5), food (Q6) and places in town (Q9). On the whole, candidates' performance matched the relative planned 'difficulty' of each question, but there were significant exceptions to this; often it seemed that students were better at catching the overall gist of a spoken passage than identifying single (supposedly 'easy') words.

Comments on individual questions

Q1

As in previous years, candidates even at the top of the ability range for this paper struggled to achieve full marks in this question. Although designed as a 'warm-up' question, it is clear that students find it hard sometimes to identify relatively common nouns. In particular, (ii) (手机) and (iii) (床) caused problems; whilst the 手 admittedly may not be very helpful in leading the candidate to 'mobile phone', one might have expected 床 to be familiar from the phrase 起床.

Q2

This question was generally handled well, although at the bottom end of the ability range there were difficulties hearing the correct age, once again underlining the need for frequent practice of numbers.

Q3

In part (i) the lexical item 大学 caused some problems; whilst admittedly less familiar to school students, one might have thought students would manage to identify this as NOT being the school type they are more familiar with. It was part (iii) - 回家 - which was a bigger hurdle, however, to learners even at the top end of the range. Perhaps candidates were confused by the verb, rather than identify the hopefully familiar 家, which was the intention.

Q4

As a crossover question, this was one of the tasks that students should have found more challenging. Yet in fact - perhaps underlining the belief that gist can be easier to deal with - all candidates who sat this paper managed to gain 2 out of a possible 4.

Q5

Whilst the script of this question seems on the surface to hold few problems for a student familiar with school subjects in Chinese, it was nevertheless the case that statistics show this to have been far more difficult for all candidates than was intended. Perhaps it was simply that

subjects were not known, or that other phrases such as 星期一, 男的 were unfamiliar; there could, of course, have been further difficulty caused by the homophonic 男 and 难. (The context in which these words were used, however, should have helped here.) One further explanation could be the need to 'process' the information heard, e.g. 没有音乐课 has to be interpreted as 'is not taught'; had this question appeared in the Higher paper, one might have expected it to be better handled.

Q6

This question was clearly targeted at the bottom end of the ability range and indeed the candidates working at C level managed this task well.

However, those working at F level only identified (iii) 巧克力 with any measure of success. Again, there is a lack of recognition of single lexical items included on the MCV list that one would expect to be known.

Q7

Considering that this is another crossover task, it was handled well by all candidates. The relative difficulty that candidates at the lower end of the ability range experienced with parts (iii) and (iv) might once again be explained by the need not only to understand such relatively difficult phrases as 离我家 and 不用花钱, but also to 'process' the spoken information to match the written answers.

Q8

Candidates all dealt well with this particular task.

Q9

The statistical results on this question, which asked learners to match the place heard with the corresponding picture, indicate that the task presented much more difficulty than had been the intention. As each sentence was presented very simply (我去。 . .), it must be the case that learners were not familiar with the vocabulary tested.

Q10

As in previous years, the last question, although not intended to be overly challenging in the context of a Foundation level paper, proved to be difficult for all, regardless of ability. The information needed to answer the questions is given in the 'correct' order, with very little extraneous material, so perhaps once again it was the vocabulary items - 明天, 很冷, 看电影 - which were not recognised. Part (d), requiring a time to be given, was the least successful: numbers again!

Paper summary

Overall, then, this paper was handled well by those who were entered for the Foundation level. Fewer questions than usual presented no difficulty for all candidates, with most tasks having at least one vocabulary item that proved challenging to part of (if not the entire) ability range. In some cases, this was, of course, intentional to allow differentiation of task by ability, but in some cases the knowledge of what might be viewed as 'basic' vocabulary was clearly insufficient to provide students with enough material to guarantee a good grade. Teachers would do well perhaps, particularly at this level, to use the MCV list as a guide to which lexical items to teach.

