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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Chinese (1CN0) Paper 1F: Listening
and Understanding in Chinese

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Introduction

This being the first year of the new specification, it is likely that students and teachers alike were understandably concerned about this year's exam. However, as far as the Listening exam was concerned, students generally performed well; questions that offer support within the question, such as the multiple choice tasks, were as usual better handled than those where a written response in English is needed.

There were several elements of this exam that were 'new': firstly regarding the question paper itself, some question formats (such as that exemplified by questions 3 and 4) had not been used previously, and multiple choice questions now have four options, rather than three as before. However, these new elements were present in the SAMS, so should not have been a surprise to well-prepared students. Secondly, regarding content, some areas of the new specification, particularly within Themes 4 and 5, have been introduced for the first time, and teachers will hopefully have predicted that at least some of these areas, needing specific vocabulary (such as 'charity shop'), would very likely appear in this year's exam. Lastly, not all questions simply demand recall of a particular lexical item, but in some cases ask that a student thinks about what he/she has heard and either 'translates' that into other words (e.g. the train is late = the train will be delayed) or has to draw an inference from the spoken words. This does not have to be as difficult as it may sound: for example, if a person is carrying an umbrella in his/her bag, then we can infer that he/she thinks it is going to rain.

Question 1: Shopping

The paper started with a familiar topic and some straightforward recall questions. A good many students, however, confused 晚上 with 上网 and chose B instead of the correct answer G.

Question 2: Weather

Again, this question presented familiar vocabulary in the context of a weather forecast. Students were able to focus on the key weather words, ignoring the more difficult phrases such as 虽然。。。但是 in part (iii); this last part of the question was , in fact, the one that most students answered correctly.

Question 3: Good causes

This was the first question on this paper to draw on the topic of 'Bringing the world together' (Theme 5); the vocabulary in this theme is likely to be less familiar to students, yet it was not the content of the question which proved difficult, but attributing each statement to the correct person. It is essential that students listen to the signals given as to who is speaking, more likely than not '(name),你呢?'

Question 4: Ambitions

Despite this question having the same format as the previous one, students on the whole performed better on this one. Many recognised the

phrase 做生意 and were not put off by the 'difficult' language of the question: 'have no career plans', 'do something useful'.

Question 5: A new attraction

This was the first question that needed a written answer, but brief responses were sufficient and a degree of tolerance was given for spelling. Most students identified the attraction correctly (museum), but the time expression 下个月 and the position phrase 火车站旁边 proved surprisingly difficult for many.

Question 6: A good friend

Generally this question was answered well by students across the ability range, many scoring at least 2 out of a possible 3. The answer here that was the most demanding was 'honest' as it was inferred and needed students to understand two fairly long phrases: 'should tell me what sort of person I am, should tell me if I do something wrong'.

Question 7: A typical school?

On the whole, students performed well on this question too. Whilst answer D was simply a recall question (都是男的), A depended on the sentence 我住在学校 being understood, and this then being interpreted as telling the listener the school must take boarders. Many students heard 'no lessons on Wednesday', but failed to catch the further detail 下午, which invalidated E as a correct answer.

Question 8: A Chinese festival

This was the first question on this paper that specifically tested 'cultural' vocabulary and it was disappointing to note how few students recognised either 中秋节(i) or 放风筝(iii), both of which were presented clearly within the spoken text, with no need to interpret the meaning in any way. Part (b), however, was often answered correctly, as students heard 好吃 and worked out that this meant Anna and her friend disagreed about the taste of the food. There was no need to mention 月饼 specifically.

Question 9: Tourist information

Many students dealt well with the dialogue between the male tourist and the female information officer. Part (ii) was a straightforward recall question, but in part (iii) the lady gave two pieces of information to indicate that Suzhou was easy to get to (only takes half an hour, no need to change train: answer C) without explicitly saying so. Part (iv) also inferred that a sweater would be a good idea as the weather will be cold. On this part, many students heard the question 'Will it rain?', but failed to realise that the reply (不会) invalidated answer B.

Question 10: Travel plans

Here the question format (answer in English) proved to be challenging to many students, relatively few students scoring more than 1. The answers to the four sub-questions depended to a large extent on a student's vocabulary knowledge; there was no need to work out any indirect

meaning. The key words here (重要, 风景, 快餐店, 护照) were, however, clearly not recognised by many. Interestingly, in answer to (iv) many students gave the reason as the lack of visa, as opposed to lack of passport. The latter term is on the Minimum Core Vocabulary list (MCV), whilst the former is not.

Question 11: School trip

Whilst relatively few students scored full marks here (5), generally this question was answered very well, despite many of the sub-questions needing more than simple recall of vocabulary. The relatively complex structure of the third sentence, beginning 除了, was grasped by many (part b). The most challenging parts seemed to be (d) and (e). This was understandable for (d), as the use of 比我更高 to infer that Simon himself is also tall was aimed at more successful students, but in (e) students let themselves be deceived into thinking the answer must be the last thing they heard (in this case 'panda'), even though Simon clearly says 我很喜欢动物园.

Question 12: An inspiring school

Once again, vocabulary here was drawn from Theme 5, in this case the topic of environment. Perhaps because of the familiar setting of this question (school), many of the less successful students gained full marks on this task, despite the lack of 'simple' recall questions. Curiously, many students identified answer A as being correct, but then crossed it out, having apparently been misled by the mention of 'cups' into thinking that D was a correct answer.

Question 13: Olympics

This was the question that in many ways paralleled the last question on the old specification: written answers, relatively few correct responses. Being towards the end of the paper, this question was clearly targeted at the more successful students, but there was an expectation that most students would be able to recognise the date (part ii). Understanding of Chinese aside, many students had a very strange idea of the months in which the Olympics are likely to occur!

Question 14: Jobs

There was only one straightforward recall element in this question (part c), but despite this, many students recognised the important 'clues' given in order to identify the correct answers. Across the whole cohort, the majority of students scored 2 or 3 (out of a maximum of 5), which is very impressive when one considers that this is the last (and therefore theoretically the hardest) question on the paper.

Conclusion

Overall then, many students performed very well on this paper, perhaps better than they had imagined they would. Some points that future students would do well to bear in mind:

- use the reading time wisely to predict vocabulary that might occur, and to put words into meaning pairs in, for example, Question 11
- do not be put off by topics that might sound hard, for example, environment; questions on this topic do not have to be full of technical detail
- listen for key words and make a note of names so that you are aware who is speaking
- remember that there will be some vocabulary items that are not on the MCV list - as stated clearly in the specification - but that these will not be tested; if they are important for the meaning of the passage, there will be support, using other words, to aid comprehension.