

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The standard achieved by candidates was similar to last year. Most candidates completed **Sections 1, 2** and **3** and continue to achieve good marks in all sections. The range of marks achieved in **Section 3** is generally wider than in **Sections 1** and **2**.

Candidates appeared well prepared for the examination.

There continues to be evidence that candidates have difficulty with the use of stative verbs such as *hao* (to be good) and *sui* (to be X years old). Often *shi* ('is') is introduced in advance of stative verbs e.g. *Ta shi qi sui* (he is seven). This gives a pronounced 'foreign' flavour to otherwise appropriate language. It appears that this type of error arises from candidates not understanding that words such as *hao* and *sui* are themselves verbs, not adjectives (and therefore they do not require the use of an additional *shi*). This error occurs in the majority of Centres and the incidence appears to be increasing.

The use of coloured pens, and pencils, by candidates in the examination is increasing. Examiners would appreciate help from Centres in promoting the use of black or dark blue pen only, as not only are pencils and light coloured pens difficult for Examiners to read, but their use is explicitly prohibited on the Instructions on the front cover of all question papers.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates performed well in these multiple choice questions. There was no pattern to the type of errors made. Errors appeared to be the result of problems with vocabulary, usually in one topic area.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-8

The majority of candidates performed strongly in these True/False questions, indicating a good understanding of a simple class timetable, including use of time expressions (days of the week/morning/afternoon) and common topics of study e.g. geography, mathematics.

Exercise 3 Questions 9-11

This exercise was extremely well done by candidates, with nearly all scoring 5 out of 5 marks.

Exercise 4 Question 12

Candidates were requested to write a short note. Performance in this question was generally of a good standard, with the majority of candidates achieving full marks.

Those candidates who performed less well usually did not address one or more of the points requested in the rubric. In most cases this appeared to be due to candidates not understanding the vocabulary/structures used in the question. A few candidates chose not to attempt the question.

Examiners are pleased to report that this year, candidates generally avoided using words in other languages, and as a result very few marks were lost because of this tendency.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 13-21

Responses were of a high standard and the majority of candidates achieved full, or almost full, marks. Most candidates tended to write full answers (i.e. complete sentences) although shorter answers (appropriate words, or phrase(s)) are also accepted here.

Question 18 generated the highest number of incorrect responses. Candidates who got more than one question wrong appeared to struggle to understand the passage and/or the questions overall.

Exercise 2 Question 22

The candidates' letters displayed a good ability to communicate information on the topics requested by the rubric.

A small number of candidates struggled with this question or chose not to attempt it. Where an attempt was made to respond to the question, the candidates who struggled generally did achieve some marks. The small number of candidates who chose not to make any attempt at **Question 22** lost the full 15 marks (out of a possible total of 45 for **Sections 1** and **2**).

The use of words in other languages was again reduced this year and very few marks were lost as a result of using, for example, Pinyin or English.

The mark scheme differentiates between accuracy (5 marks available) and communication (10 marks available). There was evidence of a range of ability in both areas. However, the majority of candidates were awarded marks towards the top of the range (3-5) for accuracy. For communication, the majority scored 7-10 marks.

Communication marks

Most candidates successfully addressed all of the topics in the rubric. There was a slightly increased incidence of incorrect words (characters) being used. Where this made the meaning impossible to understand, no communication marks could be awarded. It is advisable for candidates to use words (characters) that they are confident are correct rather than attempt to use a more difficult term they may be less familiar with. At this level, the mark scheme rewards communication and there are no extra marks available for using more 'sophisticated' vocabulary.

Accuracy marks

Candidates were generally accurate in the use of simpler structures. Many candidates also used more complex structures accurately.

The most common problem was errors in the use of stative verbs by candidates. A significant percentage of candidates continue to use *shi* with stative verbs (possibly as a result of 'translating' from other languages). Please see also comments under the General Comments section.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 23-27

Performance in the questions varied. There was no obvious pattern of errors. Candidates appeared to perform best in **Questions 23** and **24**.

Exercise 2 Questions 28-33

Performance in these questions varied, although the majority of candidates did well. Most candidates gave good responses to **Questions 28** and **30**. Incorrect responses were most common for **Questions 29** and **32**, perhaps due to difficulties identifying the relevant sections of the passage. Candidates had mixed levels of success in **Question 31**. Those who identified the correct section of the passage did well. Some answers to **Question 33** were comprehensive, and some scored less well, usually because the answers were not based on the passage as a whole.

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Paper 0547/03

Speaking

General comments

Most Centres administered and carried out the tests very well, but in a minority of cases the instructions were not followed completely. Please see the Teacher's Instructions booklet for details:

- Candidates should be given the Role-play cards in random order, not 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.
- Candidates should not be corrected during the tests
- The recording should be checked by the teacher/Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. For some Centres, the tape received by the Moderator was virtually or completely inaudible.
- Candidates should be seated close to the microphone.
- Each candidate should be introduced by the teacher/Examiner – e.g. no candidate should be required to introduce him/herself.
- The tape must not be stopped during the recording.
- There is no need for the use of English during the tests: each new section can be introduced in Chinese, for instance by saying 现在进入第二部分 etc.
- In Centres with large numbers of candidates, there should be cross moderation across the different teaching groups to ensure consistency.
- There is no need to send more than six recorded samples to the Moderator.

Role plays

It is good practice for the teacher/Examiner to read out the introduction to the Role play to set the scene.

These Role-plays presented few problems to most candidates, but there were some words which seemed unfamiliar, such as 实验室 (laboratory) and the use of 路 to indicate a bus number. In several cases, candidates did not understand the question about science subjects 科学课, and were awarded marks for clearly incorrect answers such as 'maths' or even 'Chinese'.

Where candidates give answers such as 对了 (yes) or 不知道 (I don't know), these must not be awarded full marks as they do give any indication that the candidate has understood the question. Candidates need to be given the opportunity to practise a range of Role play situations before the examination so that they become accustomed to improvising appropriate answers to unexpected questions. Candidates should also be reminded that they are not necessarily 'playing themselves' in the Role-plays and may have to use their imagination.

Topic conversation

The topics chosen seemed on the whole less ambitious than in previous years, with most candidates choosing 'My family' or 'School life', but there were some more adventurous choices, such as comparing life in two different countries, air pollution, Harry Potter or the life of Florence Nightingale. A few candidates appeared not to have prepared a topic at all.

General conversation

In most cases, these tests were carried out well, but in a few Centres the same questions were asked of all the candidates thus limiting their responses and making it hard for them to achieve the highest marks. Some Centres are still not making the demarcation between the Topic and General conversation sections clear, e.g. by using phrases such as 现在进入第三部分.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

The overall standard of candidates' work was high. Many of the letters and also the stories about what happened during the three days the parents were away used a wide range of vocabulary, idiom and grammatical structures. However, it would have been good to see some more imaginative answers for **Question 2**.

For each essay, the Mark Scheme was divided into marks for Relevant Communication (5 marks), Accuracy of Characters (5 marks), Accuracy of Grammar and Structures (10 marks) and Impression (5 marks).

Candidates were not penalised for writing too much. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that variety of vocabulary, idiom and structure is rewarded. Therefore, a long, but less varied essay will not be awarded as many marks as a shorter one with greater variety and interest. Though, candidates writing significantly fewer than 150 characters will not produce enough evidence of their ability to gain access to the highest marks.

There is no need for candidates to be unduly concerned about forgetting how to write the occasional character. However, as the questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately kept as open as possible, candidates can make their own choice of vocabulary to use. They should, therefore, avoid embarking on topics for which they know very few of the characters involved.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. The majority of candidates chose the more personal letter to their Chinese penfriend about their family. The majority of candidates covered all the guidelines and wrote a suitable beginning and ending to their letter, thereby achieving the full 5 marks for Relevant Communication.

- (a) Candidates wrote some interesting letters to their penfriends. The guideline "What do you talk about with your family?" certainly divided candidates, with some covering lots of topics of conversation with their family and others struggling to think of any. Those letters which were most successful were the ones where candidates were obviously thoroughly involved in the task, visualizing well their own experience and trying to convey it with enthusiasm to an imagined person.
- (b) A smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**. Those who did so generally wrote well and argued their case convincingly. This topic gave the more confident candidate the opportunity to express more complex ideas, but at the same time, was still accessible for candidates at all levels. Candidates came up with some good points about the pros and cons of school uniform – the sense of identity on the plus side and the lack of choice on the negative side.

Question 2

This question enabled candidates to use their imagination in telling the story of what happened during the three days when they had to look after their little brother whilst their parents were away. The essays whilst good – and often very good – on the use of language were often disappointing as far as the use of imagination was concerned. An imaginative story can help towards impression marks for candidates performing at the top end of the mark range.

All candidates should remember that writing in Chinese still requires a story structure with a proper concluding paragraph rounding off events. Too many essays consisted of a list of events occurring on days 1, 2 and 3.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary, structures and idiom. The Relevant Communication marks here were awarded for adequate coverage of the events of the three days and the majority of candidates scored full marks for Relevant Communication. Candidates not scoring full marks made little discernible effort at developing a proper storyline. Candidates writing a particularly good story were rewarded with an extra mark for impression.

There was no need to copy out the question and then start the story. This wastes time and candidates who included the characters in the question copied out as part of their character count ran the risk of falling short of the required 150 characters. Candidates were not penalised for writing too many characters, as has been emphasized earlier.

General comments on characters and grammar

The essays of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters. The ones which were frequently incorrectly written were:

漂亮，游泳，决定，家庭主妇。

There was often confusion between 话 and 活。

There were fairly frequent homophone errors, the most common of which were:

- writing 以经 instead of 已经
- writing 时 instead of 是。

Some of these could have been avoided with a careful read through by the candidate after completion of a question.

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. The most frequent problems were:

- 1 Large numbers of candidates did not seem to know how to say 'Somebody telephoned me' or 'I'll introduce you to someone' correctly in Chinese.
- 2 There was confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地
- 3 Candidates found it hard to use 了 correctly. Most candidates were able to use 了 correctly some of the time, but not all the time.
- 4 A significant minority of candidates had difficulties with word order in time sentences: e.g. they wrote 九点晚上 instead of 晚上九点。