

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The standard of performance demonstrated by candidates was comparable to that of previous years. It is pleasing to see that there are more and more non native Chinese speakers taking the exam and achieving satisfactory grades.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Questions 1-11

Most candidates did well in these exercises. There were occasional mistakes where candidates were not familiar with a particular item of vocabulary. No question caused any particular problems.

Question 12

Candidates were required to write a brief note in which they stated the date of their birthday, their age and what they would like as a present. 1 mark was available for conveying each of these three elements giving a total of 3 marks for communication. A further 2 marks were available for appropriateness of language. Performance by candidates was on the whole satisfactory. There were a few common errors such as the use of verb 是: many candidates wrote 我是十五岁. Others confused the character 多 with 岁. A very small number of candidates misunderstood the rubric and wrote to a friend asking for his or her birthday and age when they were required to tell the pen friend about themselves.

Section 2

Questions 13-22

Most candidates did well in **Questions 13 to 17** with very few mistakes. For **Question 13**, a few candidates just said that Xiao Wang was busy when a more specific answer was required. **Questions 18 and 19** proved to be more challenging for weaker candidates. Very few errors were made in **Questions 20 to 22**.

Question 23

Most candidates did well on this question which required them to write about their school, a topic it was clear they had prepared in class and were familiar with. 10 marks were available for communication, 1 mark for each item of relevant information conveyed. There were occasions where full marks for communication could not be awarded because there was simply insufficient content in what was otherwise a very good answer. As usual, just 1 of these 10 communication marks was awarded for an appropriate beginning or ending. Candidates should be made aware that only one mark is awarded for the 'top and tail' of greetings and general pleasantries not related to the question. Some candidates wrote four or five sentences on weather and health etc which was unnecessary and could not score more than 1 mark. A further 5 marks were available for Accuracy of Grammar and Structures. To score full marks candidates had to show they were highly accurate in the use of simpler structures, with occasional minor slips allowed. The common grammar mistakes were the same as those made in **Question 12**.

Section 3

Questions 24-28

This exercise proved to be difficult for weaker candidates who sometimes struggled to understand the text and questions

Question 29-34

Most candidates achieved reasonable marks for this exercise. They were able to locate some correct answers in the passage even when they did not fully understand the content.

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Paper 0547/03

Speaking

General comments

In general the standard of work heard from candidates was very good to excellent. Most Centres administered and carried out the tests very well, but in a minority of cases instructions were ignored, and this disadvantaged candidates. The Teachers' Notes booklet should be read carefully well in advance of the tests to ensure that the Speaking test is conducted and assessed correctly. Centres' attention is drawn to the points below.

Recording of candidates

- The recording should be checked at intervals by the Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. **For some Centres the cassette/CD received by the Moderator was almost inaudible, making moderation difficult.**
- Candidates should be seated close to the microphone so that they are clearly audible. If an external microphone is used it should be placed to favour the candidates rather than the Examiner.
- The cassette/CD must not be stopped during the recording of each Speaking test.
- The candidates should be introduced by name and candidate number by the Examiner, **not by the candidates themselves.**

Conduct of the tests

- **The situation at the head of the Role play should be read aloud** by the Examiner before commencing each candidate's test. This is reassuring for the candidate and establishes that s/he is playing a role.
- There is **no need for any use of English** during the tests: each new section can be introduced in Chinese, for instance by saying something like 现在进行情景对话A, 现在进入第二部分, 现在进行自由对话, etc.
- Candidates should not be corrected during the tests.
- Centres should ensure a quiet environment in which to conduct the Speaking tests, ideally away from the noise of nearby lessons taking place, movement in corridors, bells sounding, etc.

Administration

Centres are reminded of their responsibility to check that the addition of marks for each candidate is correct, and also that the transcription of the total mark from the Summary Mark Sheet to Form MS1 has been done correctly. In large Centres it may be advisable for more than one person to check these numbers.

Detailed instructions on the size of the recorded sample to be submitted to CIE for moderation are provided in the Teachers' Notes Booklet. It is the Centre's responsibility to select the recorded sample in accordance with these instructions, ensuring the sample provided covers the range of marks awarded at the Centre.

Care should be taken when preparing the sample for postage to ensure that cassettes/CDs are well packaged. CDs are particularly vulnerable to damage in transit, and need to be carefully packed.

Internal moderation

Where Centres have large numbers of candidates and wish to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking tests for their candidates they must seek permission from CIE in advance. This will be given on the understanding that the Centre puts procedures in place to ensure that the marks it submits are consistent for all candidates, irrespective of which Examiner conducted and assessed the examination. The

Examiners at the Centre must work together to ensure a common approach to the conduct of the Speaking test and the application of the mark scheme. One Examiner at the Centre must take responsibility for the standardisation of the marking of Examiners at the Centre. This person must ensure that all candidates taking the Speaking test at the Centre are judged against the same standards and that a valid rank order of candidates for the Centre as a whole is produced. Details of the Centre's standardisation procedures must be enclosed with the materials for moderation. A single recorded sample should be produced for moderation which should cover the range of marks awarded in the Centre and should as far as possible include equal numbers of recordings from each Examiner used. A Summary Mark Sheet should be submitted for each teacher/Examiner, with candidate names and numbers clearly entered.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

These Role plays presented few problems to most candidates, but some Centres need to practise this exercise with candidates, as candidates seemed unable to respond within the situation set. Candidates need to be aware that in this section of the Speaking test they should answer questions in accordance with the role they are playing and not simply answer as 'themselves'. For example, if a candidate is asked 'Where is the foreign-language bookshop?' they should be able to improvise a suitable answer and not feel that have to give directions to a real bookshop in their town.

Answers in the Role plays which are 'neutral' such as 对了 'yes' or 不知道 'I don't know' **cannot be rewarded**, as they give no indication that the candidate has understood the question.

Role plays need careful preparation: if incorrect cues are given by the Examiner, it is sometimes impossible for candidates to score the marks for a task. **In particular, the questions posed in the Role plays should not be modified by the Examiner, as this unfairly changes the nature of the examination.**

Candidates must be given the Role play cards in **random order** as specified in the Teachers' Notes Booklet, not 1, 2, 3, 4... . The number of the card given to each candidate should be recorded by the Examiner in the space provided on the Summary Mark Sheet.

Centres are reminded that it is good practice for the Examiner to **read aloud the Chinese introduction** to the Role play, to set the scene.

Role plays A

At the hospital

The term 开刀 seemed unfamiliar to some candidates.

Xiao Wang's birthday

The question 你怎么去? caused problems for some candidates.

Return from holiday

In answering the last question about comparing prices in America and China, many candidates could not use the correct form of the 比 construction, saying 美国的东西比这儿的的东西很贵 rather than ...贵得多 .

Role plays B

Arrival of Chinese friend

Many candidates could not give an appropriate answer to 你的学校离这儿多远?

A foreigner asks the way

Weaker candidates could not give a suitable answer to 火车站在哪一个方向?

Topic Presentation & Conversation

Examiners heard some very interesting topics this year. Many candidates chose 'My family', 'My hobby', 'Sport', 'School life', 'My future', or 'My weekend', but there were a few more adventurous choices, such as comparing life in two different countries, 'Flood', 'Ronaldo', 'Worry', 'President Obama', 'Global warming' and 'Sleep'.

A few candidates appeared not to have prepared a topic at all.

Centres are reminded to advise candidates not to choose 'Myself' as their topic. Where candidates choose this as their topic it can severely limit the possibilities for General Conversation and may disadvantage them.

In the best Centres, the Examiner listened carefully to the candidates' presentations, and then led them skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions, allowing them both to develop their topic and to demonstrate their language skills. For example, a candidate who was planning to become a lawyer was asked what preparation a good lawyer should have.

Centres are reminded that they should clearly indicate the transition from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation. This can be simply done by using formulae such as 现在进入第三部分.

General Conversation

In most cases, this section of the Speaking test was carried out well, but in a few Centres identical questions were asked of all the candidates. Centres are reminded that it is not appropriate for all candidates to be asked the same series of questions nor for them to be expected to talk about exactly the same topics. General Conversation should be based on the individual candidate's interests and responses. Examiners should note that in order to have access to the full range of marks, candidates must be given the opportunity to respond to unprepared/unexpected questions.

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 story about what happened that night on the train used a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structure. They were interesting and lively to read.

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 and sentence 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. However, candidates should be reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 150 characters they 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. The questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately left as open as possible, in order to allow candidates to 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.

Whilst this examination is set in simplified characters, candidates are not penalised for writing traditional characters, but they should try to write the whole essay in either simplified or traditional characters, rather than in a combination of both. Most candidates managed to write all or most of their essays in characters. Where candidates had to make occasional use of pinyin, tones were generally marked; however all candidates should ensure that when they have to use pinyin, then they add tone markers too.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

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

- (a) Candidates wrote some interesting letters about their future plans. Their 5th communication mark was awarded for any elaboration of a guideline. A number of candidates seemed unaware that 准备 has two meanings and so thought that the 准备 in the question meant 'to prepare', instead of 'to plan', 'to intend'. However, this did not generally affect communication marks which they were able to pick up elsewhere in the essay. Some candidates muddled the use of 解 and 讲, resulting in fairly frequent use of the following sentence: 我要解一下我将来的计划.
- (b) A much smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**. Those who did so generally wrote well and presented convincing and well-written arguments about the use of the Internet, only losing communication marks if they forgot to present their work in the format of a letter.

Question 2

This question enabled candidates to use their imagination in telling the story of the train journey, being the only ones awake at 2 am and discussing what happened next that night. However, some candidates did not focus clearly on the question (perhaps because they did not fully understand what they were being asked to do), and their responses were either what happened before the train journey or nothing very much to do with the train journey at all; they developed stories in different contexts. Where there was at least a loose relationship with a train journey and a good story, then this only resulted in a minimum number of marks being deducted for Relevant Communication. It is not intended that a misunderstanding of one character in the essay question should unduly affect a candidate's score, but nor is it intended that candidates should be able to pre-learn a story and reproduce it in the examination room irrespective of whether or not it fits the title set.

Candidates, in general, wrote good stories, with the best essays really drawing the reader into the sequence of events and the general excitement of being the only ones awake at 2 am. Most candidates remembered the importance of structuring their story appropriately and including a proper concluding paragraph to round off events.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary and sentence structure. Candidates should be advised not to copy out the whole question before starting their story. If they decide they must copy out the question they must not include these characters in their character count as such copied material cannot score.

General comments on characters and grammar

The essays of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters.

There were a number of homophone errors such as 觉定 instead of 决定 or 一见 instead of 意见.

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

- 1 Confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地.
- 2 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.
- 3 There was an overuse of 是 when it was not needed (i.e. when there was no particular emphasis intended), as in 我是很忙, 我是很好.
- 4 Some Anglicisation occurred, e.g. as in 我'做'了两个朋友 for 'I made two friends' or 我要上大学在北京 for 'I want to go to university in Beijing'. These kinds of errors are the result of literal translation from English into Chinese.
- 5 和 was frequently used to connect two sentences.