

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key Messages

In Reading, candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passages but also to be able to distinguish between facts, ideas and opinions. They should demonstrate the ability to extract relevant specific information from forms, letters and articles and scan for particular information, then organise and present it in a logical manner.

In Writing, candidates need to ensure that answers fulfil the task as well as displaying a development of ideas. Successful candidates should demonstrate the ability to employ a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary items. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by the candidates should be accurate.

General Comments

Performance on this component was generally very good, and consistent with the previous year. A few candidates displayed the linguistic competence of a first language speaker. Almost all candidates attempted the whole paper.

The majority of candidates coped very well with **Section 1**, showing a thorough understanding of the reading passages. In **Section 2**, almost all candidates were able to write with reasonable fluency and express their opinions. The area where the compositions could be improved was in the organisation and clarity of thinking shown, to ensure that candidates produce essays that engage the reader's interest.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

In **Question 1** candidates are required to identify the four true statements in a list of eight. Most candidates coped well with the format of the question, and realised they must only tick the required number of boxes. Performance on this opening question was good, with even the weakest candidates obtaining 2 or 3 marks.

Questions 2-5 are 3-option multiple choice questions, and were answered well by most candidates, showing that they were able to understand this part of the passage fully. **Question 4** proved to be the most challenging in the exercise, as it required candidates to read the passage carefully and to pay close attention to both the passage and the question. To reach the correct answer, candidates needed to understand the reason why the app caught the attention of the wider public, not why the developer made the app in the first place.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-12

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a blank form template, and have to complete it according to their understanding of the passage.

Most candidates could find the answer to **Question 6** with ease. Candidates need to make sure that the full name, 李小晴, is present and not just the first name. **Question 7** asks for the nationality of the protagonist. This has to be a country and not a province. The correct answer is that she is from China and not Sichuan or Guangzhou. The second part of this question asks for her place of birth. The passage says that she was born in Sichuan but grew up in Guangzhou. This was answered correctly by most, but some candidates

needed to read the passage more carefully to identify the place correctly. **Question 8** asks for the name of the school that the protagonist attends. All three characters, 科里尔 were needed to be awarded the mark. **Question 9** was answered well by most candidates. **Questions 9-12** tended to expose candidates who had not fully understood the passage, and this group of questions was found to be challenging by them. **Question 10** asks for the protagonist's hobby, and either, 曲棍球 or 运动 were accepted. Some candidates gave 棍球 which was not accepted as a correct answer. **Question 11** was handled well by most candidates. **Question 12** asked candidates to list three of the universities that the protagonist had applied for. A number of candidates wrote down that she might go to America, which was considered a harmless addition to the list of the correct three universities, Oxford, Leeds and LSE.

Exercise 3 Questions 13-20

Candidates should be reminded that answers to **Exercise 3** need to be precise and accurate. They need to ensure that they communicate their answers clearly and without ambiguity.

Question 13 was answered well by many, but where candidates were not awarded the mark, this was usually because they did not give sufficient information. Candidates needed to say that *Ah Xi needed to prepare for his college entrance exam instead of spending time forming a band*. Just saying that he needed to study was a full or accurate enough answer. **Question 14** also needed a precise response. In this question, candidates needed to point out that Ah Xi's decision to pursue a career in music was made *after he had taken the college entrance exam / once he graduated from high school / before he started university*. For **Question 15**, two elements were required, namely that *Ah Xi's parents supported his decision* (1 mark) and that they thought *he should learn more/broaden his horizons* (1 mark). **Question 16** was well-handled by most. For **Question 17** two elements were once again required, indicating that *the audience was small and they were not paid well*. **Question 18** required candidates to say that Ah Xi worked hard to learn English *because he wanted to sing English songs well* (为了唱好英文歌, 他下了大力气去学英语). **Questions 19** and **20** presented few problems for candidates.

Section 2

Question 21

Most candidates did well in this part of the exam. They demonstrated their ability to write fluently in Chinese and convey basic information in a short essay. Most of the Chinese characters produced were highly accurate which is a credit to both the candidates and their teachers.

Candidates are expected to write a passage between 100-120 characters presenting an interesting discussion based on the given bullet points. In order to ensure that candidates write within this limit, covering all the bullet points, candidates are advised to avoid writing a lengthy introduction, exchanging pleasantries at the beginning of their essays/letters. They should focus instead on the topics listed in the bullet points and demonstrate their ability to develop ideas.

Question 22

This was found to be the most challenging part of the exam for many candidates. Candidates are asked to write an argumentative essay expressing their opinions about a given issue. Four speech bubbles are provided as suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, but candidates are not obliged to include these, and can use their own ideas and opinions as well.

The key to success in this section is to make sure ideas are fully developed. It is better for candidates to try and provide an in-depth and focused discussion on fewer points, rather than covering a large number of issues superficially. The highest scoring essays contained interesting and sustained discussions with well developed ideas.

For language, the best essays were characterised by being technically accurate and well-structured with at least three paragraphs, containing a clear beginning and ending. Candidates need to remember to provide clear links between paragraphs so that there are clear and logical transitions.

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Paper 0523/02
Speaking

Key messages

- Candidates need to show their ability to use a variety of structures and precise vocabulary consistently, both in the presentation and in the conversation sections.
- Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to enable candidates to show their command of the language.
- Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner must seek permission from Cambridge before the Speaking Test period starts. Centres using more than one Examiner were not always aware of the correct procedure for internal moderation. Feedback to such Centres was provided by the Moderator and should be acted upon in future sessions.

General comments

The vast majority of Centres carried out the tests very well, and the full range of performance was heard. A variety of topics were chosen for the presentation and well-discussed with Examiners. Most Examiners had done the necessary preparation, and asked a series of excellent searching questions.

Examiners need to ensure that their candidates are put at ease and given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In order to give candidates the best possible chance, Examiners should ensure that they have read the syllabus carefully so that both the tests and the relevant administration are carried out correctly.

Candidates are reminded that this paper rewards their ability to communicate appropriately and demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and structures in order to promote their educational or employment prospects.

It is important that candidates choose a topic for the presentation which reflects their interests, as well as being related to an aspect of Chinese culture. It is also crucial that the Examiner asks a series of questions appropriate to the candidate's level. This should include questions that are more unpredictable, and enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously.

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where it was clear that oral work was a regular part of classroom activity and where candidates were familiar with the requirements of the Speaking test. In such Centres, candidates had prepared the presentation well and Examiners managed to pitch questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. The most successful candidates demonstrated a range and variety of structures and vocabulary, and showed an ability to respond and contribute to the conversation with appropriate pronunciation and intonation. Such candidates covered a selection of different topics across both conversation sections, using a variety of structures and a solid range of vocabulary.

• **Recorded sample: quality and composition**

Many Centres managed to select a good recorded sample which covered the full spread of performance in the Centre. Centres with permission to use more than one Examiner had taken care to ensure that both a good range of marks and different Examiners were represented on the sample.

In order to ensure that recordings are clear and of good quality, Centres are reminded to conduct the Speaking tests in a quiet place, away from any noise which may cause disruption. The recording should be checked at intervals by the Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. In some

instances this year, the recording on the CD was almost inaudible, making moderation difficult. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of **all** recordings **before** sending to Cambridge.

In occasional cases, candidate name and candidate number were announced by the candidate. Examiners are reminded that these should be announced by the Examiner, not by the candidates.

Centres should note that the CD should not be stopped at any point during the recording.

- **Internal moderation**

All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of **each** Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre before a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge.

Where Centres with large numbers of candidates have been granted permission by Cambridge to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess Speaking tests, the coordinating Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the Examiners in the Centre. If a particular Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the Centre, the marks for candidates examined by that Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge.

- **Clerical checks**

In most Centres, the clerical work was completed accurately. Errors in addition were found and corrected in a small number of Centres. Centres are reminded of the importance of careful checking of clerical work, and to ensure that all additions on the Working Mark Sheet as well as the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) are checked before submitting them to Cambridge.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

The mark scheme was generally well understood in most Centres. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often because candidates needed to communicate and express their thoughts and opinions more clearly. Some needed to demonstrate their ability to use a wider range of structures and vocabulary more precisely, for example, the use of 还是 and 或者, 国籍 and 国家, 鼓励 and 吉利, 环境 and 气氛, etc.

Comments on specific questions

Topic Presentation

The vast majority of candidates were well-prepared the Topic Presentation, and demonstrated good knowledge of sayings and idioms as well as a wide range of different structures. Topics about Chinese culture and customs as well as social registers were heard in the presentations this year. Some interesting presentations included '*Chinese Festivals in Different Countries*', '*Pros and Cons of the Internet*', '*Education in Taiwan*', '*Environment in Hong Kong*', '*Where has Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 gone?*', etc.

Topic Conversation

A good range and quality of vocabulary and structures was heard in the Topic Conversations and the best performing candidates also gave correspondingly impressive performances in the discussions which followed. It is important that the Examiner listens carefully and pitches questions at an appropriate level, enabling candidates to show the full range of their ability.

General Conversation

A variety of topics was heard in the General Conversation- '*environment*', '*cities and public service*', '*education and future plans*', '*healthy eating habits*', '*current affairs*', to name a few. Many Examiners were fully aware of the level of language and depth to which General Topics are discussed in this examination and pitched questions appropriately, well done.