

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In the reading section, candidates are required to understand and respond to information presented in a variety of forms. 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 various text types and organise and present it in a logical manner.
- In the writing section, candidates need to show that they can communicate clearly and appropriately in written Chinese to convey information and express opinions. Candidates are expected to use a range of vocabulary and show control of a variety of grammatical structures. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by candidates should be accurate.
- Candidates should choose *either* the traditional *or* simplified character version of the paper, and write all their answers within that section of the question paper booklet. Candidates must not answer in both versions. If a candidate starts to answer in one part of the booklet by mistake and then moves to a different character version, he/she must cross out any work that he/she does not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Candidates should try to be precise when answering questions. Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the Examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response provided by the candidate, which contains extra material that is incorrect, invented or contradictory.

General comments

Performance on this component was generally good. The majority of candidates were able to understand the reading passages in **Section 1** in detail. They also demonstrated a sound ability to communicate sophisticated ideas and could argue their cases convincingly in the writing exercises.

In **Section 2** most candidates showed that they were capable of communicating competently in the target language. Many responses successfully and clearly communicated interesting ideas, but care should be taken to ensure precision in using simple grammatical structures. Some candidates also need to take care when writing characters to ensure clarity and accuracy.

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 1 to 2 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 this exercise, as it required candidates to read the passage carefully and to pay close attention to both the passage and the question.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–14

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a blank form, and need to complete it according to their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is needed to score highly in this exercise. Generally, candidates did not face any difficulty in locating the correct information for the questions. Most candidates also showed care and precision in completing the form.

Most candidates were able to find the answer to **Question 6**. For **Question 7**, candidates needed to identify the occupation of the protagonist. A few candidates gave 自由 instead of 自由职业(者) as the answer, which could not be credited as it is not an occupation.

In **Question 8**, candidates needed to make sure that the birthplace of the protagonist, 德国汉诺威, was present and not just the country. 汉诺威 was also accepted as a correct answer. Candidates also needed to write all the characters correctly in order to get the mark.

For **Question 9**, it required the candidates to identify the institution at which the protagonist studied in China. Candidate needed to answer giving the college in Beijing, 北京电影学院, and not the University in Munich, Germany, 慕尼黑大学. Candidates needed to write the characters correctly to be awarded the mark. Some candidates wrote the character inaccurately, e.g. 兆 or 比 instead of 北.

Two elements were required in **Question 10** giving the reasons why the protagonist studied Chinese; 对亚洲文化感兴趣 and 说汉语的人比说日语的人多 or 说汉语的人非常多 were accepted. Most candidates managed to provide both reasons. Some candidates added 对他/雷克 which were not accepted as the correct answer. However, candidates who added 对我 were awarded the mark. This is because all the questions in **Exercise 2** required the candidate to put themselves in the position of the protagonist to fill in this blank form for his personal webpage.

Question 11 was answered well by most candidates. **Questions 12** needed a precise response, 近三十年徒步走遍中国 and not 近三十年走遍中国 nor 三十年徒步走遍中国. Candidates who added 他是天下第一疯 to the answer could not therefore be awarded any mark in this question.

Question 13 was handled well by most candidates. In **Question 14**, the rubric asked candidates to state the reason that the protagonist likes the book 《活着》. Some candidates added 对他/雷克的影响非常大 after the reason which were not accepted as the correct answer but candidates who added 对我的影响非常大 were awarded the mark.

In short, candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions and passage carefully. In addition, candidates should be reminded to give a precise response but not to lift whole sentences from the passage.

Exercise 3 Questions 15–21

Answers to **Exercise 3** needed to be precise and accurate to ensure that they communicated the information without any ambiguity.

Question 15 was answered well by many, but where candidates were not awarded the mark this was usually because they did not write all the characters correctly, such as 光明 or 光阳 rather than 光阴.

In **Question 16**, the three elements that were required presented few problems for candidates. Out of the three elements, 规划能力 was consistently wrong. Candidates should always remember the need to read the details in the passage with care.

Question 17 was well handled by most candidates. However, **Questions 18** tended to expose candidates who had not fully understood the passage. In this question, candidates needed to mention the different aspects of the two types of childhood, not the different goals of the two types of childhood. **Question 19** required two elements and needed a precise response. A number of candidates lifted full sentences that invalidated their answers.

In **Question 20**, two elements were once again required and candidates needed to provide a more accurate answer than just 更大风险 / 承担风险 or 更多汗水 / 付出汗水 to be credited.

Question 21 was tackled well by most candidates except very few added the subject incorrectly, 作者/他 instead of 我们 / 人们 to the correct answer of 习惯于把玩耍和学习对立起来.

Section 2

Exercise 4 Question 22

This year, candidates were required to write a letter to a friend about a charity event that was organised by school. Candidates were asked to include the reason why the school held the event as well as how the pupils would prepare, along with giving their opinions on the outcome. Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters, and successfully addressed the tasks given in the bullet points within the character limit.

Many excellent responses addressed all three points given in the question; others needed to include the main concept or keywords of charity to access the higher content marks. Some candidates had difficulty differentiating between 慈善 and 环保. A number of candidates wrote about their personal feeling of the event rather than giving their opinions on the outcome.

In terms of language use, many candidates demonstrated that they could use simple grammatical structures effectively and precisely. In order to reach the highest marking band, candidates also need to show that they can use more complex structures and sophisticated language.

Exercise 5 Question 23

Question 23 is a task which invites candidates to present arguments for and against a topic, concluding with their own point of view. This year candidates were asked to write about whether school should introduce paperless lessons. Four written comments were provided as a stimulus to provoke candidates into thinking about the topic. Candidates were not obliged to include these, and could use their own ideas and opinions. These were given as suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, and it was expected that candidates would not simply re-state the ideas provided, but present their own ideas and opinions as well. Most candidates could clearly state their opinions, and some managed to effectively organise their ideas into fully-developed paragraphs, using connective words where appropriate. Candidates needed to generate persuasive arguments and to engage the reader's interest to be awarded the highest marks. An area where improvements could be made is on composing clear and logical arguments with appropriate supporting details.

Overall, centres should continue to support candidates in writing Chinese characters accurately. Candidates should be reminded that the use of idioms and sayings only enhance the quality of the language when used appropriately.

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/02
Speaking

Key messages

- Examiners must ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test, and should study the syllabus and the examination material carefully. The components of this Speaking Test are different from those for Cambridge Foreign Language Chinese Speaking (0547/03).
- The Topic Presentation should be prepared in advance, and must be related to Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country or community.
- In the Topic Conversation, questions should not require candidates to repeat what he/she has said in the Presentation as this will not provide new evidence of using a wider vocabulary and structures for access to the higher mark bands.
- At least two topics from the list given in the syllabus should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A or B and one from Areas C or D.
- Discussion in both Conversations should include opinions, explanations, comparisons as well as facts, to enable candidates to show the level and depth of their command of the language.

General comments

The topics selected in this paper related to Young people and education, Society, The world, Cultural diversity, etc. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and the full range of performance was heard.

The vast majority of Centres carried out the tests very well. A variety of interesting topics were chosen for Presentation and these were well discussed, with Examiners asking a series of excellent searching questions. New Centres had taken on board that candidates are to be awarded for their ability to communicate appropriately and to demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and structures.

It is very important for Examiners to ask questions at an appropriate level beyond a Foreign Language examination.

Candidate performance

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where candidates were given opportunities to talk about their own interests and to defend their own opinions. In such Centres, candidates had prepared the Presentation well, the Examiner had read the Handbook carefully and pitched questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus, bearing in mind the mark scheme's descriptors. Candidates gained marks by demonstrating a range of various vocabulary and structures, showing their ability to respond and contribute to a conversation with ideas and opinions, over a selection of different topics across both conversation sections.

Conduct of the test

The vast majority of Examiners showed their familiarity with the requirements of the IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language Speaking test and were clearly aware of the importance of their role. A well-prepared Examiner ensures that his/her candidates are put at ease and are given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In a very few cases, the Topic Presentation had not been prepared in advance, timing was too short and/or the questions were too shallow or closed which limited candidates.

- **Timings**

Candidates should be allowed to present their topic for two minutes. In this examination series there were many cases of excessively long presentations. The two conversation sections should be between four and five minutes each. In the interests of fairness to all candidates, each candidate must be allowed the full examination time in each conversation section, as stipulated in the syllabus.

- **Recorded sample: quality and composition**

In a number of cases, candidates and/or the Examiner were not always heard clearly. If an external microphone is used for recording, please make sure that it is nearer to the candidate.

- **Internal moderation**

Where a Centre has a large number of candidates and wishes to use more than one Examiner to carry out the Speaking test, the Centre **must** seek permission from CIE **before** the start of the Speaking test period.

Where Centres have been granted permission by Cambridge to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking test, 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, **all** the marks for candidates examined by that **Examiner** must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge. **Details of the Centre's Internal Moderation procedures must also be sent to Cambridge**, as specified on the 'Cover sheet for moderation sample'. Guidelines for the Internal Standardisation/Moderation of Cambridge IGCSE Foreign Language Speaking tests are available from Cambridge.

- **Clerical errors**

In a very small number of Centres, addition and/or transcription errors were found and corrected. Please check all additions on the Working Mark Sheet as well as the accurate transfer of these marks to the MS1 (or a print out of the electronic marks file) before despatch to CIE.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

The mark scheme was generally well understood in many Centres. Where Centres required downward adjustment to their marks, this was often because candidates needed to express their **opinions and points of view** clearly, as well as the factual points. Some needed to demonstrate their ability to use vocabulary and wider structures more precisely, for example, the use of 减轻 and 轻松, 还是 and 或, 会, 能 and 可以, 经验, 经历 and 体验, etc.

Comments on specific questions

Topic Presentation

The vast majority of candidates had prepared the Topic Presentation very well, showing good use of sayings and idioms as well as a wide range of different structures. Topics about Chinese culture and customs are still popular e.g. 中国饮食文化与地方特色小吃, 中国汉字与书法, 中国武术, 传统民俗, 传统游戏和玩具, 传统舞蹈与戏剧, 中医药文化, 四大发明, 古代神话故事, 十二生肖, 幸运数字和颜色, 婚礼文化, 万里长城和兵马俑, 孔子及影响, 关汉卿, etc. Social registers as well as personal reflections were also heard in the Presentations this year, e.g. 唐人街, 华人社团, 独生子女政策, 人口老龄化, 中国兵役制度, 中国未来市场经济转向与影响, 不听老人言, 吃亏在眼前, 近朱者赤, 近墨者黑, 裹小脚, 周杰伦, 林丹, 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 the Presentations. Most Examiners listened carefully, enabling them to pitch questions at an appropriate level whilst observing the stipulated timing, giving candidates the opportunity to show the full range of their ability.

General Conversation

At least two Topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A and B (Young people and education / Society; the other from Areas C–D (The world, Cultural diversity). Topics chosen for General Conversation should not overlap with the content of Part Two, Topic Conversation in this Speaking test.

A variety of topics was heard in General Conversations: *environment, urban and rural life, generation gap, cities and public service, education and future plans, healthy life style, etc.*, as well as *friendship, holidays, festivals and customs*. Many Examiners were fully aware that the level of language and depth to which General Topics are discussed in this examination should be beyond that expected of a Foreign Language examination. Some are reminded that questions in this part of the examination should be more mature and in-depth at this level, for example, for a Sports and exercise topic, whether taking part in sport conflicts with study time and whether this is problematic, rather than more basic questions of e.g. where they play, with whom, how long for.

The best examining was when candidates were invited to express their opinions on a topic, or when Examiners raised a particular issue which gave candidates the opportunity to discuss both sides of the argument.