

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

Candidates should choose *either* the simplified *or* the traditional character version of the question paper, but should **not** write on both versions as it causes confusion when marking.

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.

In exercises where candidates are required to tick a certain number of boxes, such as **Exercise 1, Question 1**, candidates must not tick more than the required number of options. If a candidate makes a choice and then changes his/her mind, he/she must cross out the original choice very clearly.

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 very good. The majority of candidates coped quite well with the reading passages in **Section 1**. They also demonstrated a sound ability to communicate sophisticated ideas and could argue their cases convincingly in the writing exercises. The overall standard was high.

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 grammar structures. Some candidates needed to read the questions more carefully to ensure bullet points were addressed accurately with appropriate register. 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 ticked the required number of boxes. Performance on this opening question was very good overall. **Questions 2 to 5** required candidates to fill in the blanks with the words provided. These questions required candidates to read the passage carefully and to pay close attention to the passage and the questions. Most candidates answered these questions well, showing that

they were not only able to understand relevant sentences fully, and also had no difficulty differentiating between the words given, such as 把 and 被, 受到 and 得到.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–13

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a form, and need to complete it according to their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is needed to score highly.

Question 6 asks which special field the protagonist has studied. Candidates needed to give his specialised subject, 景观设计 and not his occupation, 首席执行官. Candidates needed to differentiate between 专业 and 职业 correctly to be awarded the mark.

In **Question 7**, candidate needed to answer with the qualification that the protagonist obtained (硕士) rather than the universities from which he graduated (清华大学和米兰大学). Candidates needed to differentiate between 学历 and 学校 in order to get the mark.

Question 8 proved to be the most challenging in this exercise, as it required candidates to pay close attention to the passage and give a precise response. However, most candidates were able to find the answer to **Question 9** with ease.

Questions 10 asked candidates to identify the most popular product. Candidates who understood the usage of Chinese punctuation, ‘——’ or the meaning of the keyword ‘目前业绩最好’ in the passage and answered ‘手工干花筒’ correctly, were awarded the mark.

For **Question 11**, some candidates gave 网店上线 rather than 网店上 which was not accepted as the correct answer. Two elements were required in both **Question 12** and **Question 13**. They were handled well by most candidates.

Generally, candidates did not face much difficulty in locating the correct information for the questions in **Exercise 2**. Most candidates showed care and precision in completing the form, and understood that they need to put themselves in the position of the protagonist to fill in this product innovation enrolment form.

Exercise 3 Questions 14–21

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

Question 14 required two elements and were both tackled well by most candidates, but where candidates were not awarded the mark, this was usually because they did not give sufficient information to show the trend.

Questions 15 to 19 were answered well by many. Two elements were required in **Question 20** which required candidates to understand the question fully. A number of candidates added 不想 to the answer(s), which was considered to invalidate the response.

For **Question 21**, two elements were once again required. Most candidates gave one of the elements correctly. Many lifted 不到10%的读者通过付费订阅新闻, which was not awarded the mark.

In short, candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions and passage carefully in **Exercise 3**. Furthermore, candidates should be reminded to give a precise response but not to lift whole sentences from the passage.

Section 2

Exercise 4 Question 22

This year, candidates were required to write a letter to a friend about a plan to take part in the school’s talent show. Candidates were asked to include how to prepare this show as well as the reason why the audience would like his/her performance. Many excellent responses addressed both points given in the question; others needed to differentiate between 怎么准备 and 做什么准备 to access the higher content marks. A number of candidates wrote about what they had already prepared rather than how they were going to

prepare. 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.

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

Exercise 5 Question 23

Question 23 was found to be the most challenging part of the exam for many candidates. This year, candidates were asked to write an article to a local newspaper to express their opinions on whether the city should limit the number of visitors to a historical site by increasing the entrance fee. 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. The key to success in this exercise is to make sure ideas are fully developed. Candidates needed to generate persuasive arguments and to engage the reader's interest to be awarded the highest marks.

For language, the best essays were characterised by being grammatically accurate and well-structured with paragraphs containing a clear beginning and ending. Candidates need to remember to provide links between paragraphs so that there are clear and logical transitions. 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 read the instructions given in the syllabus booklet well in advance of the speaking test period.

The two-minute Topic Presentation should 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 already said in the Presentation. In order to reach the higher marks for vocabulary and structures, new evidence needs to be heard that candidates can use a wider range of vocabulary and structures.

At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A-B and one from Areas C-D as set in the syllabus.

Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to show the level and depth of their command of the language.

Tests must be conducted in Mandarin.

General comments

The majority of centres were well-prepared for the conduct of the Speaking component, which resulted in tests being carried out successfully in most cases. The full range of performance was heard this year, with many candidates demonstrating their ability to communicate appropriately in spoken Mandarin Chinese and to confidently use a wide range of vocabulary and structures.

A variety of interesting topics were chosen for the presentation and most examiners were able to help sustain a full follow-up discussion by asking a series of excellent searching questions. The focus of this component is to reward candidates for 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 therefore very important that examiners ask questions at the appropriate level, which 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 candidates were given opportunities to talk about their own interests and to defend their own opinions. In such centres, candidates had clearly prepared their presentations well, and examiners pitched questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. Candidates gained marks by demonstrating a range of vocabulary and structures, demonstrating an ability to be responsive and contribute to a conversation with ideas and opinions, covering a range of different topics across both conversation sections. The strongest candidates showed precise use of a solid range of vocabulary and a variety of structures in their responses.

Conduct of the test

From the evidence heard in the recorded samples, the vast majority of examiners were familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language Speaking test and understood the importance of their role. A well-prepared examiner ensures that his/her candidates are put at ease and given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In a very few cases, the Topic Presentation didn't

seem to have been prepared in advance, the timing of sections was sometimes too short and/or the questions were too shallow or 'closed' which severely affected candidate performance.

Duration of test

Candidates should be allowed to present their topic for two minutes. In this examination series there were many cases of excessively long presentations, which leaves less time for the follow-up discussion with the examiner. Between four and five minutes each should be taken for both of the conversation sections. 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. It is essential for candidates to make full use of the time, particularly in the General Conversation section where at least two topics need to be covered.

Recorded sample: quality and composition

In a number of cases, candidates and/or the examiner were not always clearly heard. Background noise makes the moderation process difficult, and in some cases there was evidence that it had affected candidates' performance at the time of exam. If an external microphone is used for recording, please make sure that it is nearer to the candidate. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings before sending to Cambridge.

Internal moderation

Where centres 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 enclosed in the paperwork sent to Cambridge. Guidelines for the Internal Moderation of Speaking tests are available from Cambridge.

When a total mark has been changed as the result of internal moderation, the breakdown of marks should also be updated accordingly to avoid the confusion with a clerical error.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well understood and applied correctly. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often because candidates needed to express their opinions and points of view more clearly in addition factual points. Some needed to demonstrate they could use a wider range of vocabulary and structures more precisely, for example, the use of 放松 and 轻松, 还是 and 或者, 经验, 经历 and 体验 etc.

Comments on specific questions

Topic Presentation

This year a wide range of interesting topics about Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country and community were heard. 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 included 中国人过春节的变化, 汉字的由来, 餐桌礼仪, 中西烹饪的差异, 颜色的意义, 婚礼, 满月礼, 尊师重教, 孝顺, 中国电影, 中国极限运动, 中国古代神话故事, 中国象棋, 筷子, 中国虎妈, 八卦, 汉服, 葫芦丝, 擂茶, 蒙古族舞蹈, 海南鸡饭, 麻辣火锅, 锅贴, 北京胡同, 上海地铁, 牛车水, 李白, 孙悟空, 王羲之, 梁祝, etc. Some candidates also tackled aspects of current affairs such as 微信, 淘宝, 支付宝, 共享单车, 一带一路, etc., which showed candidates' knowledge of current issues.

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 understood the importance of listening carefully to candidates' presentations, which then enabled them to lead the candidate skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions pitched at an appropriate level, allowing candidates to both develop their topic

and to demonstrate their language skills. Examiners should avoid asking the candidate a prepared question if the candidate had already given the answer to that question previously.

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 and D (The world / Cultural diversity). Topics chosen for the General Conversation should not overlap with the content of Part Two, Topic Conversation in this Speaking test.

A variety of topics was heard in the General Conversations: *'environment', 'cities and public service', 'education and future plans', 'healthy eating habits', 'urban and rural life', 'generation gap', 'current affairs,' 'friendship', 'holidays', 'festivals and customs'* to name a few. Many Examiners were fully aware that the level of language and depth to which general topics should be discussed in this examination should be beyond that expected of a Foreign Language examination. In a few cases, questions were not challenging enough to allow candidates to express themselves fully. Centres are reminded that the treatment of topics such as 'Sports and exercise' should be more mature and in-depth at this level, including questions dealing with subjects such as whether taking part in sport conflicts with study time and whether this is problematic, etc., rather than more basic questions such as where they play, with whom, how long for, etc. 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.

