

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The standard achieved by candidates was similar to last year. Candidates appeared well prepared for the examination. A very small number of candidates chose not to attempt the writing tasks, **Question 12** and **Question 21**, immediately losing access to 20 marks. The poorest performing candidates who attempted these questions were generally able to score 2 or 3 marks or more suggesting that attempting the questions is worthwhile. Centres may wish to advise candidates who are not confident about the writing tasks to make an attempt at the questions rather than miss them out entirely.

Grammatical problems continue to be frequent. Candidates continue to 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*). Erroneous use of *he* ('and') as an exact equivalent to the English 'and' (e.g. linking two nouns) is a frequent problem.

Some candidates had tiny handwriting which, on occasion, made it difficult to read their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates performed well in these multiple choice questions and there was only a small number of incorrect replies. Where errors occurred, these appeared to be the result of problems with individual items of vocabulary. **Question 2** (correct answer *dayi*: overcoat) seemed to attract the most incorrect answers. Few candidates made more than one error on this exercise.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-8

The majority of candidates performed strongly in these multiple choice questions indicating a good understanding of vocabulary and expressions relating to weather. The most common errors occurred in either **Question 6** or **Question 7**.

Exercise 3 Questions 9-11

This exercise was completed very successfully with most candidates 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. A few candidates chose not to attempt the question.

Candidates generally avoided using words in other languages, and very few marks were lost as a result of this.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 13-20

Responses were of a high standard and were rewarded accordingly. Candidates tended to write full answers (i.e. complete sentences) although shorter answers (appropriate words, or phrases) were also accepted.

Questions 15, 16 and 17 generated the highest number of incorrect responses.

Exercise 2 Question 21

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

Use of words in other languages increased this year. Marks are not awarded for Pinyin, English or words in other languages.

The mark scheme differentiates between accuracy (5 marks awarded) and communication (10 marks awarded). There was evidence of a range of ability in both areas.

Communication

For communication the majority scored 8-10 marks. Most candidates successfully addressed all of the topics in the rubric. Some incorrect words (characters) continue to be used. Where this made the meaning impossible to understand, a communication mark could not be awarded.

Accuracy

Although the majority gained good marks, overall performance was possibly lower than in previous years. This was due to continuing problems with use of stative verbs and *he* ('and') – possibly as a result of 'translating' from other languages. Please see also the comments under the 'General comments' section.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 22-26

Performance in these multiple choice questions varied, but there was no obvious pattern of errors. Candidates appeared to have greatest difficulty with **Questions 23, 24 and 25**.

Exercise 2 Questions 27-31

Performance in these questions was generally good. Most candidates gave good responses to **Questions 27, 28 and 30**. Incorrect responses were more common for **Question 29**. Most candidates provided successful answers to **Question 31**. A few candidates continue to seek answers to this final question by quoting from the passage when a freer response is required.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/03

Speaking

General comments

Most Centres administered and carried out the tests very well, but in a minority of cases instructions were ignored, and this disadvantaged candidates. The Teacher's Notes booklet should be read carefully in advance of the tests to ensure that they are carried out correctly. The points below should be noted.

Recording of candidates

- The recording should be checked at intervals (between candidates) by the teacher/Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. Cassettes/CDs must be checked before despatch to ensure that they are audible. In the case of some Centres, the recording submitted to CIE for moderation was completely inaudible, making moderation impossible.
- Candidates should be seated close to the microphone.
- Once a candidate's test has started, the recording should not be stopped until the end of their test.
- The candidates should be introduced on the recording by the teacher/Examiner, not by themselves.

Conduct of the tests

- There is no need for any 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.
- Candidates should not be corrected during the tests.

Internal moderation

- Centres with large numbers of candidates who wish to use more than one teacher/Examiner to conduct the tests for their candidates must seek permission from CIE in advance of the examination session.
- If permission is granted this will be on the condition that internal moderation is carried out at the Centre in order to ensure that all tests are conducted and assessed to the same standard. A sample of just six candidates should then be submitted to CIE for the whole Centre.
- Evidence of how internal moderation has been organised should be provided with the recorded sample.

The sample

- Complete recordings of just **six** Speaking Tests should be sent to CIE. Some Centres are sending recordings of all their candidates.

Posting the sample

- Please ensure that the cassettes or CDs are well-packaged. CDs are particularly vulnerable to damage in transit, and need to be carefully packed in suitable containers.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

These Role Plays presented few problems to most candidates. However, it was apparent that in some Centres, candidates needed more opportunities to practise this section of the test as they seemed unsure of how to react within the context of the Role Play situation. For example, if, as in one of the A Role Plays, the context is that two people are buying train tickets, a plausible response to 'How many tickets do you want?' is

unlikely to be 'one'. Candidates should also be given practice at providing appropriate answers. For example, if, as in one of the B Role Plays, they have to say the type of museum they have been taken to, they should be able to come up with something from their imagination even though in reality they have not been taken to a museum. In the context of a visit to a zoo, it was not appropriate for candidates to say the animal they wanted to see was a cat or a dog: good candidates were able to suggest 老虎, 猴子 or 狮子. Answers such as 对了 'yes' or 不知道 'I do not know' **should not be rewarded**, as they give no indication that the candidate has understood the question.

Centres are also reminded of the following:

- Teacher/Examiners must conduct the Role Plays as specified in the Teacher's Notes Booklet. Extra tasks must not be created nor must any of the stipulated tasks be omitted as this will confuse and disadvantage candidates.
- Candidates should be given the Role Play cards in **random** order. The number of the card given to each candidate should be recorded in the space provided on the Summary Mark Sheet.
- It is good practice for the teacher/Examiner to set the scene for the situation by reading aloud the Chinese introduction before conducting each Role Play.

Topic Conversation

The best performances occurred in Centres where candidates were allowed to speak for 1 to 2 minutes on a topic they had prepared, but not learnt by heart, and were then questioned on their chosen topic by the teacher/Examiner in such a way as to allow them to develop their material and demonstrate their language skills.

The most popular topics this year were 'My family', 'My hobby', 'Sport', 'School life', 'My future' and 'My weekend'. These all provided ample material both for the candidate's presentation and for the ensuing discussion with the teacher/Examiner. There were some more adventurous choices, such as comparing life in two different countries, 'Health', 'Youth crime', 'Mother love', 'Road safety', 'Pollution' and 'Sleeping'. Fortunately the candidates who had chosen such ambitious topics had the linguistic ability/maturity of ideas to cope with them.

In some cases, candidates appeared unaware of the requirement to present a prepared topic. In others, candidates had chosen 'Myself' as their topic. This should be discouraged as it can pre-empt the General Conversation, restricting possible areas for discussion in that section of the test.

Centres are reminded that it is extremely helpful to both candidate and Moderator if they can indicate clearly the point at which the Topic Conversation has finished and the General Conversation is about to begin. This can be simply done by using phrases such as 现在进入第三部分.

General Conversation

In most cases this section of the test was conducted well by teacher/Examiners, but in a few Centres identical questions were asked of all the candidates. This is not acceptable. A range of different topics and questions must be covered with candidates in order to ensure that in each case a natural and spontaneous conversation develops, based on the individual candidate's interests and responses. Teachers will have practised questions on a variety of topics in preparation for the examination, but the candidate should not know which precise topics will be covered in the actual exam or the particular questions that will be asked on any topic.

In the case of a few Centres, recordings stopped after the Topic Conversation. Centres are reminded that the General Conversation should last for 5 minutes and that this is in addition to the 5 minutes already dedicated to the Topic Conversation. Candidates cannot be awarded marks for sections of the test there is no evidence that they have completed.

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 the boating trip to the pretty village 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 about 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. However, as the questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately 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.

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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. By far the most popular choice was the letter about a trip to China to visit a penfriend. The majority of candidates covered all the tasks set out in the rubric 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 about their visit. Virtually all of them appeared to have understood the question and most completed all the tasks, apart from occasionally writing to their mother instead of their grandmother. There was some confusion between the meaning of 房子 and 房间.
- (b) A smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**. Those who did so, generally wrote well and presented convincing and well-written reasons for why the study of Chinese is important.

Question 2

This question enabled candidates to use their imagination in telling the story of a boat trip and a visit to a pretty village. Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary and sentence structure.

Relevant Communication marks were awarded on the basis of how well candidates responded to the question of 'what they saw and what happened' and the best essays really drew the reader into the sequence of events. There were some evocative descriptions of the village and good stories of what happened after disembarking from the boat: it was up to the candidates as to whether they focused more on

description or action or both in equal measure. Pleasingly, even when faced with the challenge of writing in Chinese, most candidates remembered the importance of structuring their story and included a concluding paragraph to round off events.

村子 caused some difficulties as candidates occasionally mistook the word 'village' for a person, a snake, an animal, a type of tree or a house. However, as long as candidates wrote a good story, such misunderstandings only caused them to forfeit a minimum number of marks for Relevant Communication. It is not intended that a misunderstanding of one character in the essay question should unduly affect a candidate's score.

Candidates should be reminded 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. The ones which were frequently incorrectly written were:

开兴 instead of 开心 or 高兴; 知道; 漂亮; 游泳; and a confusion over 房子/房间

There was still often confusion between 那 and 哪

There were fewer homophone errors than in previous years, although the one which still occurred frequently was the use of 以经 instead of 已经 and 已前 instead of 以前.

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 Overuse of 是 when it is not needed e.g. 环境是很美 instead of 环境很美
- 4 Failure to use an appropriate measure word when talking about the number of pupils in their class
- 5 Anglicisation, e.g. as in 我 '做' 了两个朋友 for 'made two friends'
- 6 Frequent use of 和 to connect two sentences.