

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 8281/01 Speaking</p>

Key messages

- The vast majority of candidates had prepared their presentations well, incorporating factual information about Japan and its culture.
- Candidates were able to speak using a range of grammar and vocabulary accurately; fluency could still be improved.
- Candidates were able to answer questions on a variety of topics.
- Candidates need to be encouraged to develop their answers and say as much as they can for every question.
- Candidates should take every opportunity to speak with native speakers, to develop a strong 'feel' for the language.
- Candidates need to be able to ask questions which arise naturally as part of the conversation.

General comments

Candidates seemed well-prepared for the oral task, with many showing evidence of having prepared their presentation and practised normal, daily life conversations about school, hobbies, family, travel and so on with their teachers or Japanese friends. Circumstances have meant that far fewer candidates have been able to actually travel to Japan, and this was reflected in both the content of what they said and the need for greater fluency and naturalness in their speaking. Candidates are encouraged to take every opportunity to speak Japanese with native speakers where this is possible.

Candidates should be encouraged to develop the ability to ask questions naturally as part of the conversation. Some candidates incorrectly used 'Anata' when asking questions, and some candidates were unable to ask questions at all, even when the teacher prompted them and said "Do you have any questions for me?"

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

The vast majority of candidates had prepared an acceptable presentation. This year, for understandable reasons, their source material seemed to come more from books than from their own personal experience, and perhaps correlated to this, candidates seemed slightly less passionate and had fewer opinions on what they were presenting. Candidates had clearly practiced well, and the grammar, vocabulary and delivery was usually of a good standard. The most successful presentations were those which employed grammar and vocabulary that the candidates were comfortable with and could use well. In some cases, candidates had prepared a presentation which included very difficult lexis and grammar beyond their normal working level, which made it difficult for them to manipulate and deliver confidently.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates were able to answer the questions posed to them; in some cases candidates needed to improve on the level of detail and personal engagement displayed in their responses. When choosing the topic of their presentation, candidates should anticipate the type of questions that might be asked in this section, and ensure they have some spare material in reserve to be able to use during the topic conversation. The strongest candidates were able to genuinely engage in debate and conversation with the examiner. Weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to passively wait for questions, answer them straightforwardly and then stop; candidates should be encouraged to extend their responses and attempt to take the lead and be proactive in the conversation.

Section 3: General Conversation

Candidates generally engaged well with the examiner in this section and were able to answer questions on different topics. Sometimes candidates needed to go beyond short, simple answers to fully develop their responses. Candidates should be reminded that they have to ask questions as part of the conversation; a significant number of candidates were not able to do this naturally or spontaneously.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** choose the word (or words) from the options given with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;
- **Question 2:** make a sentence which includes the grammatical structure given in the question; this should be a sentence created by the candidate and not copied from the text;
- **Question 3** and **Question 4:** candidates should formulate the answers in their own words and refrain from copying from the text;
- **Question 5:** write within the word limit. In part (b) candidates should express their own ideas rather than repeating ideas from the two texts;
- **Language:** when preparing for the examination, revise the basic grammar, structures and kanji list.

General comments

A full range of performance was seen this year, with many candidates doing well. Most candidates engaged with the paper and attempted all the questions. Those candidates who read both the instructions and the passages thoroughly were well-placed to understand what each question was asking for and could therefore respond appropriately.

The topics of the reading passages included the regional revitalization of a small island in Japan and running cooking classes for people in Japan who come from other countries; most candidates showed a good understanding of the topics and managed to respond to every question.

It was noticeable this year that a significant number of candidates relied on copying from the reading passages when responding to **Question 5(a)** rather than rephrasing ideas into their own words. In **Question 5(b)** candidates needed to describe or provide some kind of explanation relating to the food they would make for guests at a welcome party – this was often omitted which prevented candidates from scoring 5 marks. Candidates need to ensure that they manage their time carefully to ensure they allow sufficient time to spend on the final summary task; there were several scripts which showed evidence that candidates were rushed in the final task.

Many candidates used kanji for AS level and some of them wrote very well. A few candidates did not spell words correctly in katakana.

In order to get high mark bands for the Quality of Language, examiners need to see examples of language that has been generated by the candidate. Most candidates were aware that they should not copy large sections of language directly from the text and should use their own words in grammatically correct Japanese

Candidates should ensure their answers are written as neatly as possible; illegible scripts remain a problem, either due to messy crossed-out answers, or poor handwriting.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

The purpose of this exercise is to identify the meaning of 5 items of vocabulary from the text. Very few candidates received full marks, although the majority of candidates managed to score 3–4 marks this year again. Most candidates attempted all questions. **Question 1(b)** was found to be the most challenging question amongst candidates, followed by **Question 1(e)**.

Question 2

Many candidates created sentences which used a good number of kanji and most scored 3 or 4 marks for this question. Candidates should not use the same verb/adjective from the passage in their answers for this question, nor should they merely copy the sentence from the passage which contains the tested grammar point – this is stated in the rubric. Most candidates were aware of this, but those who did not produce their own examples could not be awarded the mark.

All candidates need to focus on writing an accurate sentence using appropriate grammar. It is essential for candidates to learn basic verb formation. Higher-scoring candidates seemed well-prepared for this exercise and were able to show their knowledge of AS Level grammar and vocabulary. Both polite form and plain form writing are accepted in this question.

Candidates are advised to keep their answers short in this question. Candidates must read the passage carefully taking note of where the structure comes from so that they understand and replicate the correct usage. A mark cannot be given if the structure does not use the required grammar, even if the right verb is used. The meaning of the sentence produced must make sense in Japanese, it is not enough just for the sentence to be grammatically correct. Candidates should check their answers carefully to avoid spelling mistakes, such as hard sounds or kanji with the same reading but different meaning.

(i) e.g. 先生にほめられました。(passive)

In this exercise, candidates had to recognise from the context provided in the passage that they were required to produce a sentence in the passive, not potential. Many candidates managed to produce a good passive sentence using ほめられます or しかられます correctly. Some candidates used たべます which could sound like a potential form depending on the particle, and so caused ambiguity in some cases. The most common mistake was using the potential form.

(ii) e.g. 天ぷらを食べてみます。

Most candidates succeeding in producing a correct sentence. Where a mark was not scored, this was either because candidates made a mistake forming the te-form, such as 食べてみます、作てみま す、 or because they tried to apply the te-form to an adjective, for instance, おいしてみます。

(iii) e.g. けっしてあぶなくないです。

This question was well-answered amongst candidates and a variety of interesting sentences was produced. Many candidates clearly understood how to produce a sentence using the required grammar. In a small number of cases candidates omitted けっして from their answer, and it is worth reminding candidates of the importance of checking their answer at the end.

(iv) e.g. しけんはとてもむずかしいんです。

Many candidates succeeded in producing a correct sentence using the grammar appropriately with plain verbs, adjectives or nouns. Some candidates made a mistake forming the ta-form, confusing the ending んだ such as 飲ん or 遊んだ and so on. There were a few candidates who wrote responses such as 上手するんだ、旅行に行くなんです or きのう友だちと会ったんでした、etcetera.

(v) e.g. ご飯を食べないでねました。

For this question, the strongest candidates had considered how ないで was used in the passage and produced a correct sentence as a result. On the other hand, there were many candidates who wrote ないでください、ないでほしい or used the same verb as in the example from the passage, which could not be awarded the mark.

Question 3

In **Question 3** and **4**, candidates need to show clear evidence of understanding. It is expected that candidates will rephrase the passage to express answers in their own words; if answers are lifted directly from the passages this is reflected in the Quality of Language mark awarded, which is based on the language generated by the candidate themselves. The majority of candidates responded well and most answers were presented clearly this year. Weaker candidates tended to rely heavily on lifting language unchanged from the passages, which does not always show genuine understanding. The best answers were those which showed evidence of careful reading and where candidates had included the key words or concepts needed to answer the question asked.

It is not necessary for candidates to use the polite form in their answers; answers can be written in the plain form and kanji should be included and written correctly. It is not necessary to use any kanji from outside the syllabus.

Illegible answers remain a problem. Candidates are reminded to write neatly and clearly to ensure that examiners can decipher what they are trying to express. If candidates find it necessary to write more than that which will fit into the space provided, they should indicate where the remainder of the answer is located.

- (a) Many candidates responded to this question well and gained 1 or 2 marks. Some candidates included 小さい畑 in their answers, which was not accepted. Candidates need to focus on what information the question is asking for and respond appropriately; they should be able to discard irrelevant or incorrect information not necessary for the answer. e.g. みかんは小さいすぎると、すてられていました which does not answer the question.
- (b) Most candidates gained 1 or 2 marks for this question. The question asked for the *characteristics* of Mr Motokawa's jam making and in some cases candidates misinterpreted this and instead provided figures around how many jars of jam he had made or how many people he employed, which did not answer the question.
- (c) Whilst many candidates succeeded in responding to this question well, others struggled to produce correct answers, mixing the subject up, as in 本川さんがきちんとしたものを作れば、それにお金を出してもいいと考えました or not completing their answers, for example しかない商品を作ることが大切です. The best answers used paraphrase well in order to gain marks for both content and Quality of Language.
- (d) This question was worth 4 marks, meaning 4 distinct pieces of information were needed and most candidates achieved 1 or 2 marks. Amongst weaker responses it was common to see irrelevant material included such as 作りたい食べ物を考える／グループになって会社を作る／自分たちの会社に名前をつける which could not be credited. Candidates had mixed success in rephrasing their answers with some not managing this at all and others showing a good ability in generating their own language correctly.
- (e) Most candidates received 1 or 2 marks for this question. Weaker responses referred to aspects not directly related to the question, such as 世界中どこでも同じ or 島をはなれないで明るい未来を作る. A few candidates misspelled 興味 as 趣味.

Passage Two

Question 4

The majority of candidates were able to respond to all the questions and most also answered in their own words. A few candidates did not attempt all questions.

It is essential that candidates read the passage thoroughly and then read each question carefully in order to ensure their answers are appropriate. Candidates must rephrase their answers as much as possible rather than lift their answers from the passage directly because if they do this, they cannot be awarded fully for the Quality of Language. Candidates should be reminded of how to present their answers so that they are linked properly, where necessary. Many candidates used the て form incorrectly, and some even used と to link

whole phrases. It is strongly recommended for all candidates to check their answers carefully to avoid simple errors such as spelling mistakes.

- (a) Candidates generally managed to respond to this first question and most of them received 1 or 2 marks out of a possible 3. Some answers showed evidence of misunderstanding, such as, 外国に住んだ経験がある or 友だちに日本料理の作り方を教えた.
- (b) This exercise was well-answered by most candidates and many gained the full 3 marks. Where candidates did not manage to identify 3 reasons, they usually omitted 世界文化遺産登録された.
- (c) Most candidates managed to supply 3 details from the text about the preparations the author made before opening the cookery school. A common mistake was for candidates to include 料理の本を持っている in their answer and weaker responses tended to omit 英語で説明する. There were some examples of very well rephrased answers, such as 友だちに日本料理を作ってあげた for 友だちに日本料理をふるまった.
- (d) Many candidates scored 2 marks for this question. A small number of candidates supplied answers which could not be credited such as 学生はドイツ人で した or どの国の生徒も歓迎でした.
- (e) This question was generally well-answered and most candidates scored 2 marks. It was noticeable that responses to this question were frequently lifted directly from the passage without rephrasing, which led to the inclusion of unnecessary details. Some candidates wrote 外国の食べものを食べるとその国の料理が自分の口に合うか一番先に考えてしまうことがある which was irrelevant to the question asked and may suggest a misunderstanding.
- (f) A mixed performance was seen in responses to this question. Weaker responses again relied heavily on lifting from the passage, including irrelevant information and not showing true understanding of the text or question, e.g. すしの歴史について 質問され私も勉強しなければならなかった.

Question 5

Overall, most candidates performed well and some thoughtful and interesting work was produced.

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Candidates need to be aware that they must provide 10 distinct points from both passages according to the question asked for **part (a)** and talk about their opinions or ideas in **part (b)**, all within the word limit of 280 characters. Some candidates used up all the character space answering **part (a)** and did not respond to **(b)**.

Candidates should be reminded to follow the word limit and should learn how to use 原稿用紙. It was unnecessary for candidates to write vertically. Candidates should endeavour to write clearly and neatly so that all answers are legible.

- (a) Most candidates managed to identify and use points from the passages to create a summary about the ways in which making food can be useful to other people. Candidates tended to draw their ideas mostly from Passage one although stronger candidates also used Passage two to create a more balanced summary. This year there was a strong tendency towards copying from the passages; candidates should be reminded and encouraged to use their own words. The most successful responses were those which rephrased the ideas and drew out key elements in concise language. Lifted responses were frequently very long and meant that there was not room to include 10 points in the character limit. Some candidates produced thoughtful responses about the problems of food shortages in the world, which unfortunately did not relate to the passages or the question. Candidates should be reminded that part (a) is a summary task, and so all points must be drawn from the passages – elements related to personal experience or general knowledge cannot be credited.

- (b) The scenario for part (b) seemed familiar to candidates and so many were able to write well on the topic. Most candidates mentioned what food they might cook for a welcome party but not all managed to explain why their chosen food might be good or appropriate for the situation. A lot of candidates talked about making national dishes or serving local food. Stronger candidates managed to express and explain their ideas very well using appropriate AS level grammar.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high level to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it challenging to structure their ideas grammatically and to communicate in their own words in written Japanese at the level. There were mistakes with particles, and this caused difficulty in understanding what candidates were trying to say, or it changed the meaning of the sentence from what they wanted to say. Candidates should pay attention to the polite form and the plain form as sometime these were mixed in sentences.

Candidates should aim to use kanji from the defined content in order to show their kanji skills rather than just using hiragana. Stronger candidates used a variety of kanji words in their writing beautifully. Generally speaking, candidates succeeded in producing a well-structured essay in this question.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03
Essay

Key messages

- Candidates were able to write using a good range of grammatical structures, vocabulary and kanji.
- Please encourage candidates to use as wide a range of sentence patterns as they are able, rather than repeating the same one over and over again. Some candidates repeatedly used dictionary form with **ことができます**.
- Candidates demonstrated good knowledge both of the culture of Japan and of the topics studied.
- Whilst most candidates wrote in paragraphs, sometimes the point of each paragraph was not clear, and the overall argument the candidate was trying to make was not clear.
- Essays should have an introduction and a conclusion.
- Candidates should either write in polite form or plain form, and should avoid mixing the two.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated that they had been well taught and well prepared for this examination, and were able to write pieces in Japanese with a good level of grammatical complexity, and range of vocabulary and kanji. They clearly had ideas to express and examples to back these up, but sometimes these failed to be structured into a coherent whole, and it was difficult to understand whether the candidate was for or against the statement presented in the examination paper. Candidates need to structure their work better, making sure that they are building an argument with clear points for and against.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 若者

This question was well handled by those who chose it, and candidates showed confidence in discussing politics using topic specific vocabulary. Some candidates argued for the proposition and others against, but they were equally well able to substantiate their cases. The statement was cast as 'Adults sometimes say that young people are uninterested in politics', and in order to present a full response to this, essays also needed to include an exploration of whether it is fair for adults to say this, or whether this is an incorrect perception.

Question 2 メディア

This question was about engaging with news through social media. The **しか** in the statement seems to have caused some candidates to misunderstand the question, who wrote about how you could not understand the world correctly if you did not use social media. Candidates often needed to be clearer in their arguments to express whether the points they were making were for or against the proposition. For example, some responses stated that '*On social media you get the news really quickly*', but this point was not built into the structure of the essay as a whole for the reader to understand whether it was being mentioned as a strength or weakness of social media.

Question 3 機会均等

The question required candidates to debate whether university was the only route to a successful life. This was very well-answered, with many candidates discussing the broader question of what 'success' meant, before developing their arguments as to whether university was essential or not for such success.

Question 4 ひまな時間のすごしかた

This was by far the most popular question. The negative implication of the *だけ* was missed by some candidates, who wrote only of the benefits of games. Stronger responses picked up on the comparison with studying implied in the question. For this question, the use of seemingly pre-learnt material on the good use of free time seemed to be frequently included by candidates, with little effort to incorporate the material into a response to the specific question posed in the examination. Candidates should be reminded that responses should be spontaneous and relevant to the specific question asked.

Question 5 科学と医学の発展

Most candidates who chose to answer this question about the likelihood of medical advances curing all diseases, wrote about a utopian future free from illness. Some detailed and perceptive essays were seen arguing that the unlimited growth of science and medicine were not necessarily beneficial to people.