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FOREIGN LANGUAGE MANDARIN CHINESE

Paper 0547/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The standard achieved by candidates was similar to last year. Most candidates completed **Sections 1, 2** and **3** and continue to achieve high marks in all sections. The range of marks achieved in **Section 3** is generally wider than for **Sections 1** and **2**.

Candidates appeared well prepared for the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Candidates performed well in these multiple choice questions. The most common error was in **Question 3**, which appears to indicate a lack of familiarity with the word *Gonggongqiche*.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-8

Candidates performed strongly in these True/False questions, indicating a good level of understanding of simple expressions of location and direction.

Exercise 3 Questions 9-11

This was a successful exercise with nearly all candidates scoring 5 marks.

Exercise 4 Question 12

Candidates were required 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 generally displayed one (or a combination) of the following weaknesses:

- Problems understanding the rubric, including misreading of the rubric. In particular, a small number of candidates either did not indicate where they were going for **(a)** or mentioned only one thing they wished to do (rather than two). The importance of reading the rubric carefully should be stressed.
- Problems writing Chinese characters.

A small number of candidates used words in other languages in this exercise. Communication marks are not awarded for use of words written in other languages e.g. English words or words written in a Romanised form of Chinese such as Pinyin.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 13-20

A very successful exercise overall. Responses were of a high standard with the majority of candidates achieving full, or almost full, marks. Candidates who performed less well generally struggled to understand the passage and the questions overall.

Exercise 2 Question 21

The standard of responses to this question was generally high. The content of candidates' letters was sometimes original and interesting (in the middle as well as at the top of the mark range) and displayed a good ability to communicate at this level. A small number of candidates struggled with this question (some chose not to attempt it) although they completed the other exercises. This may suggest that the difficulty is largely with producing a piece of writing in Chinese.

Although use of words in other languages is becoming less frequent, a small number of candidates continue to resort to words in languages other than Chinese in this exercise. Marks are not awarded for use of words written in other languages e.g. English words or words written in a Romanised form of Chinese such as Pinyin.

The mark scheme differentiates between accuracy (5 marks awarded) and communication (10 marks awarded). There is evidence of a range of ability in both areas. The majority of candidates were awarded marks towards the top of the range (3-5) for accuracy. For communication, the majority scored 6-10 marks.

Communication

Most candidates successfully addressed the tasks stated in the rubric. A small number of candidates could improve their marks by focusing their answers more closely on the required elements, as marks are not awarded for comments on completely different topics.

Accuracy

The most common problem is errors in the use of basic stative verbs. A significant percentage of candidates frequently used *shi* with stative verbs (possibly as a result of 'translating' from other languages), e.g. *Tianqi shi hao* for 'the weather is good'.

Section 3**Exercise 1 Questions 22-26**

Performance in the questions varied. **Questions 24** and **25** appeared to be the most challenging.

Exercise 2 Questions 27-32

A wide range of performance was seen by Examiners, although candidates generally coped extremely well with this final exercise. Most gave good responses to **Questions 27, 28, 29** and **32**. Incorrect responses were most common for **Question 30**, due to difficulties with comparisons i.e. use of *bi*. Answers to **Question 31** were in some cases not based strictly on the passage, or did not identify both of the points requested by the question.

<p>Paper 0547/03</p>

<p>Speaking</p>

General comments

In most Centres the Speaking test was conducted very well, with the Examiner using skilful and sensitive questioning techniques to allow candidates to show their skills. Most candidates demonstrated a high standard of spoken Mandarin Chinese. Both candidates and their teachers are to be congratulated on the standards achieved.

There were one or two problems this year with Centres failing to check the levels of the recording, making moderation difficult as the tapes were virtually inaudible. **It is vital that such checking is done at the time of the Speaking test to ensure that proper recording is carried out.** In a small number of cases the tape was stopped during the test, although it is clearly stated in the Teacher's Notes Booklet that this should not be done.

In a few Centres the Topic Conversation and General Conversation were not clearly separated, and this seriously disadvantaged candidates. There were also a few instances where English was used, not only in introducing the Topic Conversation. This is not necessary, and should be avoided, as the whole examination should be conducted in the target language of Mandarin Chinese.

Marking was generally consistent and fair, and in all but a few Centres only minor adjustments to marks were required as a result of moderation.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Most Examiners kept to the scripts provided for the role plays, but a few departed from them and/or asked supplementary questions. This is not necessary and may disadvantage candidates in this section.

'Generic' answers such as *Wo bu zhidao* (I do not know.), *Shi*. (yes) or *Dui* (correct) should not be given marks as they demonstrate no comprehension of the specific question asked. If a candidate gives such an answer, they must be prompted by further questioning to give a specific response.

Candidates need to be taught how to handle improvised dialogues, and to see how they are different from dialogues about themselves and their own school. Candidates need to be given practice in this type of improvised dialogue so they are not surprised to be asked to make up names, telephone numbers and so on.

Role Play A – Cards 1, 2 and 3

Weaker candidates needed some prompting to make up suitable names for football teams.

Role Play A – Cards 4, 5 and 6

Some candidates did not seem to realise they were in an improvised dialogue, not one about their own school. Coming up with the surname of a Chinese teacher caused problems for candidates who could not work out what *xing* meant. Quite a few were also unfamiliar with the term *na zhong?* (what type of...?).

Role Play A – Cards 7, 8 and 9

Weaker candidates did not always know *duo jiu?* (how long?).

Role Play B – Cards 1, 4 and 7

The term *guan men* (close the gates) was unfamiliar to some, who went on to give unlikely closing times.

Role Play B – Cards 2, 5 and 8

This was handled well by most candidates, who were clearly familiar both with the situation and the relevant vocabulary.

Role Play B – Cards 3, 6 and 9

This was also handled well by all but the weakest candidates.

Topic (prepared) Conversation

It was good, once again, to see some more ambitious prepared topics, e.g. the nature of happiness, the nature of one's personality, junk food and the environment, as well as other less demanding, though perfectly acceptable, ones, e.g. 'school', 'my Friend' or the contrasting of one country with another. A few candidates used the Topic Conversation to talk in general about themselves, which pre-empted the kinds of questions that should be asked in the General Conversation. Candidates should be advised by teachers not to prepare 'Myself' as a topic.

General (unprepared) Conversation

Some Centres are still failing to make the transition from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation clear. Doing so is helpful both to the candidate and to the Moderator: *Xianzai Ziyou jiaotan* or *Xianzai bufen* are both acceptable ways of indicating the transition.

In most Centres, the Examiner used skilful questioning to allow a relaxed but searching conversation to take place.

Paper 0547/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

The overall standard of candidates' work was high. Many essays displayed a wide range of vocabulary, idiom and grammatical structures and 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).

Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that variety of vocabulary, idiom and 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. Candidates writing significantly fewer than 150 characters were unlikely to score high marks.

There is no need for candidates to be unduly concerned about forgetting how to write the occasional character. In order to enable them to show what they know and can do, questions are deliberately left as open as possible, thus allowing candidates to make their own choice of vocabulary. They should, however, avoid embarking on topics for which they know very few of the characters involved.

Candidates should make sure they know characters such as 中国, 汉语, 爸爸, 妈妈. Most did, but this was not always the case.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. The majority of candidates chose the more personal letter about a new friend. They usually covered all the required elements 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 to their aunt about their new friend. The most successful answers were those where candidates were obviously thoroughly involved in the task, perhaps visualising the person to whom they were addressing their remarks. Some of the words and phrases used to describe the appearance and personality of the new friend were particularly good.

The wording of the question was designed to be as accessible as possible. However, all candidates should make sure they write to the best of their ability. Whilst most candidates scored more marks for **Question 1** than **Question 2**, there were some scripts where very good candidates did better on **Question 2**, largely because their answer to **Question 1** was a little unambitious.

Some candidates had difficulties with 国籍, 年龄 and 爱好 in the question.

- (b) A smaller number of candidates chose this alternative. Those who did so generally wrote well and argued their case convincingly. This topic gave the more confident candidate the opportunity to express more complex ideas, but at the same time, was still accessible for candidates at all levels.

Question 2

This question enabled candidates to use their imagination in telling the story of what had happened the previous evening. Most of the stories involved car accidents, illness or the friend forgetting to come. In general, candidates communicated well, with the best essays really drawing the reader into the sequence of events. There were some exceptionally good pieces of writing.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary, structures and idiom. Communication marks were awarded on the basis of how well candidates responded to the question of what happened next, with reference to the 'situation' outlined in the question. Most candidates scored full marks for communication.

Candidates should be advised that it is not necessary from them to copy out the question before they start writing their answer. This wastes valuable time.

A few candidates confused 发生 in the question with 发现 .

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:

昨天, 名字, 问, 医院, 汽车, 冷, 今, 漂亮, 目的 .

There was often confusion between 话 and 活 and between 上 and 下 .

There were fairly frequent homophone errors, the most common of which were:

writing 以经 instead of 已经

writing 二时 instead of 二十

writing 对 instead of 队

writing 认位 instead of 认为 .

Some of these could have been avoided with a careful read-through by the candidate after completion of their answer.

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. The most frequent problems were:

- Large numbers of candidates did not seem to know how to say 'I telephoned somebody' correctly in Chinese.
- There was confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地 .
- Candidates found it hard to use 了 correctly – most were able to use 了 correctly some of the time, but not consistently.
- Many candidates had difficulties with comparisons, i.e. 'he is 6 months older than me' etc.