

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 23**, losing 20 marks immediately. The poorest performing candidates who attempted these questions were generally able to score 5 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 seem to be becoming more 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.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Most candidates performed well in these multiple choice questions, scoring full or nearly full marks. Any errors appeared to be the result of problems with individual items of vocabulary. Where candidates failed to score a mark, it was often on **Question 2** (correct answer *bi*, pen).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-8

The majority of candidates performed strongly in these Yes/No choice questions, indicating a good understanding of a simple location map and use of expressions of relative direction (north, south, east, west, between, beside) and common locations (train station, post office, school). Where errors occurred, it was usually on **Question 7**.

Exercise 3 Questions 9-11

This was a very successful exercise with nearly all 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. In most cases this appeared to be due to candidates' failure to understand the rubric. A few candidates chose not to attempt the question.

Examiners are pleased to report that this year candidates generally avoided using words in other languages.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 13-22

Responses were of a high standard and the majority of candidates achieved full, or almost full, marks. Most candidates tended to write full answers (i.e. complete sentences) although shorter answers (appropriate words, or phrase(s) are also accepted here.

Question 15 generated the highest number of incorrect responses.

Exercise 2 Question 23

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

Use of words in other languages was less than in previous years. Very few marks were lost as a result of using, for example, Pinyin or English.

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

Performance here seemed to be improving compared with previous years. For communication, the majority scored 8-10 marks. Candidates successfully addressed all of the topics in the rubric. Some incorrect words (characters) continue to be used and where this made the meaning impossible to understand, no communication mark could be awarded.

Accuracy

Although the majority gained good marks here, there was some evidence that overall performance was lower than in previous years. This was due to increasingly frequent 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 24-28

Performance in the questions varied. There was no obvious pattern of errors. Candidates appeared to perform best on **Questions 24** and **28**.

Exercise 2 Questions 29-34

Performance in these questions was generally good. Most candidates gave good responses to **Questions 29, 30, 31** and **33**. Incorrect responses were more common for **Question 32**, although the majority performed well. Candidates had mixed levels of success in **Question 34**. Some answers were comprehensive, but many scored less well, usually because the answers quoted the final sections of the passage rather than being based on the meaning of the phrase *fei Qinghua Beida bu du* in the context of the passage as a whole.

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 not followed, and this disadvantaged candidates. The Teacher's Notes booklet can be opened 4 working days before the Centre conducts its first Speaking Test and should be read carefully, to ensure that these are carried out correctly. Below are some points to note:

- The candidates should be introduced by the Teacher/examiner, not by themselves.
- Candidates should be given the Role play cards in random order, not 1, 2, 3, 4... .
- Candidates should not be corrected during the tests.
- The recording should be checked at intervals by the Teacher/examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. **For some Centres the tape received by the Moderator 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 paused/stopped until that candidate's test (2 Role plays, Topic conversation and General conversation) has finished.
- 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.
- In Centres with large numbers of candidates, there must be internal moderation across the different teaching groups to ensure consistency. Marks submitted to CIE must follow a single rank order.
- There is no need to send more than the recordings of **six** candidates to CIE for moderation.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

It is good practice for the Teacher/examiner to read aloud the introduction to the Role play to set the scene.

These Role plays presented few problems to most candidates, but there were some words which seemed unfamiliar, despite being in the Defined Content, such as 卧室 'bedroom'. Some Centres still do not appear to teach the use of 路 to indicate a bus route number. A surprising number of good candidates were unable to give directions correctly, and were unable to say 'turn left', etc. in a grammatically correct way.

The questions set in the Role play should not be modified arbitrarily by the Teacher/examiner as this unfairly changes the nature of the examination.

In the Role plays, answers which give no indication that the candidate has understood the question, e.g. 对了 'yes' or 不知道 'I do not know', should not be credited.

Candidates should be given practice at **improvising** appropriate answers to unexpected questions. They need to realise that they are not necessarily playing themselves in the Role plays.

Topic Conversation

The topics chosen seemed on the whole more ambitious than last year. Although many candidates chose 'My family', 'School life', 'My future', or 'My weekend', there were some more adventurous choices, such as comparing life in two different countries, 'Bike race in Bali', and 'Stress'. Candidates should be encouraged to choose a topic in which they have a personal interest bearing in mind the level of their linguistic skills.

A few candidates appeared not to have prepared a topic at all.

Candidates who chose 'Myself' as their topic were disadvantaged in the General conversation as the subjects that would usually have been discussed in the final section of the test had already been discussed in the Topic conversation.

In the best Centres, following the initial presentation, the teacher led the candidates skilfully through the Topic conversation by asking them questions which allowed them to develop their topic and demonstrate their language skills.

General Conversation

In most cases, this section of the Speaking test was carried out well, but in a few Centres identical questions were asked of all the candidates. The General conversation should be a spontaneous and genuine conversation arising out of each candidate's interests and responses. It should not be rehearsed or prepared beforehand. Candidates are disadvantaged when they are not given the opportunity to show that they can respond to unexpected questions.

Some Centres are still not making clear the ending of the Topic conversation and the start of the General conversation. This can be simply done by using phrases such as 现在进入第三部分.

Regrettably, a few Centres stopped the test after the Topic conversation and so their candidates could be not be awarded any marks for the General conversation part of the test. It is important that all candidates are allowed to complete all parts of the test.

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 description about the visit to the park used a wide range of vocabulary, idiom and grammatical structures. 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, 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. However, candidates should be reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 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 kept 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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. The majority of candidates chose the letter about their dog, which was in many ways encouraging, as most candidates would undoubtedly have written about their favourite festival before in class, but still felt confident to embark on a topic which has not come up specifically on this paper previously. The majority of candidates covered all the guidelines and wrote a suitable beginning and ending to their letter, thereby achieving the full 5 marks for Relevant Communication.

- (a) Candidates wrote some engaging letters about their dogs. Virtually all of them appeared to have understood all the guidelines and most followed them all. A significant number did not know how to say 'fur' in Chinese, but this did not really matter and some good attempts were made, although candidates could have just missed 'fur' out altogether and said 'my dog is black' etc.
- (b) A smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)** and those who did so generally wrote well and convincingly about their favourite festival and how they spent it last year.

Question 2

This question enabled candidates to use their imagination in telling the story of the visit to the park. There were lots of stories about getting lost and also some really strong descriptive language used to describe the environment in the park. Some candidates were obviously mystified as to how a visit to the park could be in any way interesting. All candidates should remember that this question is very open and it is entirely up to the candidate as to what they write – for instance, when asked to 'talk about what you saw in the park', there is absolutely no need for a candidate to write about flowers and trees, unless they want to; as an alternative, they could write about people, buildings, animals, lakes, boats etc.

Candidates, in general, wrote good stories, with the best essays really drawing the reader into the events. Most candidates remembered that writing in Chinese still requires a story structure with a concluding paragraph rounding off events.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary, structure and idiom. The Relevant Communication marks here were awarded on the basis of how well candidates responded to the question of 'what they saw and what happened'. Most candidates scored full marks for Relevant Communication. Candidates not scoring full marks made little discernible effort at developing a proper storyline. Candidates writing a particularly good story were rewarded with an extra mark for Impression.

There was no need to copy out the whole question and then start the story. Whilst the first two sentences served as a useful introduction with the 你 changed to 我 in each case, copying out the whole question wastes time and candidates who included the characters in the question copied out as part of their 150 character count did themselves no favours. Candidates were not penalised for writing too many characters, as has been emphasized earlier.

Unlike in previous years, candidates all seemed clear about the meaning of 发生, which was encouraging.

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:

知道, 玩, 天气, 汽车, 漂亮 (even though it was in the question), 游泳, 圣诞节

There was 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.

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

- 1 There was 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 Many candidates had difficulties with the age of their dog when expressed in months e.g. 'he is only 3 months old' etc.