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Chinese (continuers)

2015 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

## School Assessment

It was evident at moderation that teachers who had familiarised themselves with the Stage 2 subject outline and school assessment requirements had prepared their students well and based their assessment decisions appropriately on the performance standards. All teachers are advised to ensure that they are familiar with the current Stage 2 subject outline and school assessment requirements at the start of the school year. Moderation of the school assessment resulted in confirmation of most grades.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Generally speaking, students’ performance was of a good standard. The most successful students demonstrated depth and breadth of responses to the various tasks. In general, the length of tasks, including text production, was appropriate, but there were a few with either insufficient or excessive word-counts.

Interaction

The interaction task should allow students the opportunity to showcase their level of language skills in response to higher-order questioning by giving their own opinions and engaging in discussion with the interlocutor/teacher.

The most successful students were able to respond effectively to open-ended questions spontaneously with elaborations and justifications of their opinions. The less successful students relied on overly scripted notes which focused on information only. Students who were able to speak uninterrupted after questioning were able to demonstrate breadth and depth of language and a variety of sentence structures.

Text Production

Topics for text production were mostly appropriate and relevant, and students achieved reasonably well in this assessment type. The most successful students used a wide range of complex grammar structures and vocabulary which enabled them to demonstrate their learning at the highest levels. Less successful students had difficulties in elaborating on the reflective and analytical questions to show a deeper understanding of the texts. The assessment conditions for text production may vary, including the allowance of one draft, or test conditions with dictionary support, or extended lesson time to complete.

Text Analysis

Texts selected for the text analysis tasks included content that provided students with the opportunity to address specific feature IR2, ‘analysis of the language in texts’. Although past examination papers are a good source of appropriate texts, teachers must ensure that the questions give students the opportunity to meet all of the requirements of the performance standards at the highest level. Questions that focus on content only are not sufficient to allow students to perform well in this section.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

There are three assessments of students’ in-depth study of a topic: an oral presentation in Chinese, a written response in Chinese, and a reflective response in English.

The overall performance in all three assessments was of a high standard. However, oral presentations proved to be more challenging for students as they had to master the correct pronunciations of unfamiliar words and phrases related to their research topics. The most successful student responses in the written response task demonstrated depth of understanding and technical vocabulary. In general, more students were successful in writing the English reflection than in past years. Students who achieved at the highest levels expressed their own reflective thoughts rather than stating the facts of their research topics.

Choices of research topics can influence how successful the outcome of students’ work is. Although students are likely to choose a topic of their own interest, the difficulty of the topic and whether students have the language ability to express their findings needs to be considered carefully.

The wide range of topics for the in-depth study included festivals, unemployment, Confucius, comparisons between Chinese and Western medicines, traditional Chinese weddings, the one-child policy, Chinese food, and comparisons between Chinese and Australian cultures and values.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

The majority of students demonstrated a high level of preparation for their oral examinations. They engaged the examiners well in the conversation section. Students were able to show their enthusiasm and apply a range of linguistic expressions. Most students also prepared well for the discussion section and they were able to converse with the examiners with great interest and detail about their chosen in-depth study topics.

Section 1: Conversation

Most students performed well in this section and demonstrated thorough preparation. Almost all students were able to talk about familiar topics, such as family, friends, school, education, interests and hobbies, holiday, travel, and future work. Most students interacted effectively by maintaining a spontaneous conversation, sometimes seeking clarification of questions. All students were encouraged by examiners to extend their answers to show more depth. The most successful students were able to elaborate their ideas very well by using a wide range of complex linguistic structures and connective devices to support their viewpoints, such as 我觉得; 因为…, 所以…; 不但…, 而且…; etc. Very successful students provided extensive answers which were supported by giving their own examples and personal opinions.

The less successful students provided only factual information without elaboration. The most successful students provided interesting details in response to the questions.

Some grammar and expression errors were: 多个一百, instead of 一百多个; 说英语在兄弟姐妹; 他是很聪明; 我是十七岁; 我喜欢不但…, 而且…; etc. In most cases grammar mistakes did not impede meaning. To help ease students’ nervousness, examination preparation could include using the online sample questions to do some practice oral examinations throughout the year. It is also helpful to teach students to ask questions in Chinese, such as …用中文怎么说,请您再说一遍, etc.

Section 2: Discussion

The discussion allows students to explore and provide details about their in-depth study topics. Most students were able to discuss their research on their chosen topics with depth and understanding.

Most students’ oral expression was very good, as they were able to demonstrate their capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately, and to apply sentences with coherence in structure and sequence. The most successful students used specialised vocabulary and terminology to discuss their research. Many students also applied cohesive linguistic connective devices effectively in their discussion, such as 我的研究题目是…, 我研究了…个方面; 第一个方面是…; 我学到了…; 我的看法是…; etc. Most students were able to demonstrate interpretation and reflection of their research and reflected on their own learning by providing personal views and cultural values about their in-depth study. Some students also gave in-depth details about specific aspects of their topic. The best student responses included a reflection on their learning and elaborated explanations of what they had achieved personally from their research. A minority of students brought support materials to the examination and, of these, only a smaller number used the support material effectively to help explain the points of their in-depth study.

Overall, most students coped well with the discussion section of their oral examinations, demonstrated thorough preparation, and provided examples and evidence to support their conclusions. Examiners encouraged students to extend their answers by asking questions allowing them to show more depth, such as为什么…, 你学到了什么？最有意思的方面是什么？etc. However, a small number of students’ chosen topics were too hard for their language level, which limited the depth and breadth of their topics. Also, a small number of students showed lack of preparation and were unable to discuss their in-depth study topics in depth and provided limited descriptions about the aspects of their topics.

It is strongly recommended that teachers guide students to choose a suitable topic for their in-depth study that is appropriate to their language level and linguistic skills. Teachers should also explicitly teach reflection on culture, values, and beliefs, as well as ways of asking for assistance to maintain a conversation.

Written Examination

In general, students performed well in the written examination. Overall, the standard of Section 1: Listening and Responding was better than in previous years. The variance of achievement in Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A, was reflected in students’ ability to analyse, interpret, and reflect on texts. Reading and Responding, Part B, was answered very well by most students. In Section 3: Writing in Chinese, more students chose Questions 9 and 10 than Question 11.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

For Question 1(a), most students were able to identify that the audience for the announcement were visiting Australian students. In Question 1(b), most students identified that it was a cultural performance involving singing, dancing, and the playing of instruments, and other details, such as that the performance takes place at 5 p.m. The more able students specifically identified that the audience were exchange students at Xi’an High School and the performance was to take place on the 4th floor in the Music Room.

For Question 2, most students were able to identify four reasons referred to in the text, such as the special New Year dinner, don’t need to cook, don’t need to do dishes, gifts for children, the most delicious food in Beijing, and the variety of dishes.

For Questions 3(a) and 3(b), most students correctly identified that David travelled to Beijing by train and that the three goals for his visit to Beijing were to visit the tourist sites, to visit his brother, and to improve his Chinese oral language skills. However, some students were unable to identify that David travelled by plane to Shanghai, not Beijing.

For Question 4(a), most students were able to correctly identify that Xiaopeng wished Kylie good luck, as it was difficult to find a job in China for high school students. Most students also identified that Kylie wanted to work part-time at a supermarket and the more able students identified that she also wanted to work in a restaurant. Most students stated that Xiaopeng wanted to study medicine at Beijing University to become a paediatrician, and that his reason for doing so was to help his little brother and other children be happy and healthy.

For Questions 5(a) and 5(b), most students identified that the speaker had spent four weeks in Shanghai and that the speaker thought young people were traditional before his visit and modern after his visit. Most students were able to identify at least one way Chinese young people connect with their culture.

Overall, the interpretation of meaning in the Listening and Responding section was very good. In order to gain maximum marks, students should give evidence, examples, or more details for their answers, especially where requested to do so.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

For Question 6, most students correctly analysed the tone and register of the language in Text 6. Most students were able to identify that the author of the text was from the country and was advocating for better conditions for the country.

For Question 7, most students were able to interpret the meaning of the text. Students need to aim at answering the points of the questions accurately rather than translating a whole paragraph, which is unnecessary. The most able students correctly identified the language that the author used to encourage people to respond; however, several students were unable to analyse the structure of the argument.

For Questions 6 and 7, many students were able to provide detailed analysis of interpretation and reflection by giving evidence and examples to support their viewpoints and opinions. Interpretation and reflection of tone, register, and linguistic features were very good. However, analysis of content, context, purpose, concepts and perspectives was difficult for some students. In order to do well in these questions, students needed to extract evidence and examples from the texts to support their answers. A suggestion for teachers would be to give guidance and support for students to identify the features of text types and to provide evidence and examples from the text to support their viewpoints.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

In Question 8, most students were able to elaborate on their ideas and opinions with well-supported arguments. The majority of the students were able to use an extensive range of complex linguistic structures with accuracy and a range of cohesive devices. Most students were able to organise information and ideas logically and coherently. The most successful students also applied the conventions of the letter text type, such as 亲爱的, 你的朋友…, which included the date and name at the end. The less successful students did not use the name of the writer (Taylor), as instructed. Some students used their own names.

The majority of student responses were relevant to content, purpose, and audience. Their responses also conveyed appropriate details, ideas, information, and opinions. Students applied the information in the text well and were able to organise their ideas around the questions asked in the text.

Though most of the students were able to state their opinions very well, quite a few students struggled to explain how to get along with roommates, which indicated that students need to practise answering ‘how’ questions.

Overall, students demonstrated excellent understanding in responding to Text 8 in Chinese. It was encouraging to see that students had a strong command of using the letter format. Suggestions for teachers would be to teach students to explain ‘how’ questions with details and examples, and also to explain to students to read instructions carefully, such as using the designated name for their responding letter rather than using their own personal names. It is also important to guide students to read questions carefully and make sure that all parts of a question are answered.

Section 3: Writing in Chinese

In this section, students are required to answer one question out of the three options. Approximately 50% of students selected the first question (Question 9), approximately 40% of students selected the second question (Question 10), and the remaining students chose the third question (Question 11). Most students coped well with the writing task, which indicated that the level of challenge was suitable for the majority of students. Some students only partially answered Question 9 by failing to write their reasons for thanking the host. In Question 10, some students were unable to explain the benefits for overseas students of participating in extracurricular activities. In Question 11, although most students described the festival activities very well, many did not make comparisons between festivals in China and Australia. Some students were not familiar with writing a blog in Chinese (Question 11).

There were some incorrect characters and grammar and expression errors which were influenced by English grammar, such as 我很多乐趣; 我学习的在外语国家; 看看复合词游览胜地; 我想你来澳大利亚和去学校一起; 我想祝你好运为子你的将来.

Overall, the majority of students wrote very well for this section through using a good command of Chinese. They demonstrated a very good level of linguistic skill and organisation of ideas. There were some linguistic and expression errors, mainly related to English sentence structures. There were also some inappropriate word choices, possibly chosen directly from a dictionary. Some teaching suggestions are to explicitly teach the text organisation, grammatical features, and language conventions of the text types listed in the subject outline.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Each student should have a separate task sheet and performance standards sheet for every assessment.

Moderation materials must be the students’ original work. Photocopies are not suitable for moderation, as they may be hard to read. Schools need to make sure not to put individual pieces of work in separate plastic sleeves. CDs, DVDs, or USB drives for both interaction and oral presentation tasks should be included for moderation. If teachers use listening materials as part of the text analysis, it is useful if the transcripts are included in the moderation bag. It is recommended that the audio is in MP3 format and should include all oral tasks.

It is important that a learning and assessment plan and task sheets are submitted for moderation. If the teaching and learning program differs from the approved learning and assessment plan, an addendum must be submitted in the moderation package.

When schools combine to form one assessment group, it is important that there is a common interpretation of the performance standards.

The packaging and presentation of materials for moderation was generally well organised.

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