



2008 LOTE: Chinese Second Language Advanced GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

High marks were given to those students who appeared to be confident and were well prepared for the 2008 oral examination. Students were expected to understand all of the questions asked about their family, hobbies, school life and future aspirations. Students who excelled gave extended responses to the questions, while students who responded with briefer responses often fell short of the required standard. High-achieving students are also expected to be challenged by more difficult but topic-related questions.

Generally, students' oral performance levels reflected the degree of their understanding of the oral examination requirements and how well they had prepared for the oral assessment. Some students handled the general conversation and detailed study with ease, while others responded to questions with apparently memorised answers and were therefore less able to respond spontaneously to questions.

The students generally followed the instructions on the assessors' questions, although some students did not listen carefully to given questions and gave irrelevant or off topic responses. Some students demonstrated their superior organisational abilities by planning their answers in a more logical way. However, other students still had some difficulty organising their thoughts. This may be improved by helping future students read and comprehend a variety of textual materials and verbal responses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students were expected to interact with assessors and talk about aspects of their personal world, including family and friends, school and activities, interests and future aspirations.

Communication: Demonstrated capacity to maintain and appropriately and effectively advance the exchange and clarity of expression

Most students met this criterion satisfactorily and were able to respond to assessors' questions. Students understood the questions asked and although some had difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly and in sequence, most generally spoke clearly and used an appropriate range of vocabulary and grammar.

Outstanding students had obviously anticipated the type of questions that might be asked, and had prepared appropriate and interesting responses. Some students occasionally used English in their conversation, for example, names of their school subjects and activities. These terms should be in Chinese. Students are asked not to state their name or the name of their school.

Some students did not correctly pronounce or failed to differentiate the four tones, thereby confusing the assessors, for example, 澳洲 was pronounced 欧洲; 庄严 to 严庄; 疼爱 to 痛爱.

Content: Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Students were generally able to talk about their family, school, hobbies and ambitions. It is suggested that some students would have performed better by focussing on the question itself rather than talking about something only slightly related.

Students' performance on this criterion was slightly lower than for the communication criterion, but higher than in the language criterion. Students' capacity to support or elaborate on information, ideas and opinions with reasons, examples and evidence is crucial. Their responses should avoid generalisations and stereotypes such as hearsay in their comments. It is better that the students express their own opinions rather than memorise a statement made by someone else.

Students who responded with simplistic answers did not demonstrate their full capacity. They should avoid generalisations and stereotypes in their comments. It is important to present a good range of information, ideas and opinions clearly and logically.



Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

The performance levels of students in this criterion were varied. Some students were able to demonstrate an awareness of appropriate style and register such as respectful forms for the older generations, and modest ways of talking about their own strengths.

It would be advantageous if students were able to apply a range of grammatical patterns to the conversation, such as 'although', 'since', 'not only but also', 'as long as', and 'prefer to'. Students must realise that this general conversation task is more than a dialogue test of their Chinese speaking skills. Often students neglect to use certain alternative phrases and link grammar patterns to shape their speech. It is also important that students are able to self-correct their errors. Many students did not have a broad vocabulary but were able to successfully repair their sentences through simple and alternative self-correction strategies.

Grammar and language misuse was an issue for some weak students. For example, 责任性 (责任感), 资历 (经历); 七百仙 (百分之七); 口腔 (口音), 尊敬 (尊重), and so on. Students should check with their teacher or a dictionary to confirm appropriate phrases.

Section 2 – Discussion

It was very encouraging that the topics chosen by students this year for the Discussion ranged from the Silk Road to tea, wedding to funeral ceremonies, historical figures to modern buildings. Consequently, it was evident that the students had enjoyed their Detailed Study, which tended to lead them towards achieving better results. Students are encouraged to use a range of texts as resources for their Detailed Study. The Chinese Internet is one of a range.

The topics chosen reflected the interests of students and inspired them to elaborate on information and to respond with their opinions. Topics that were too narrow, too broad and sophisticated to organise and adequately cover the requirements, and topics that were too superficial or lacked depth, proved problematic.

The Detailed Study needs structure and the title should not be ambiguous. The texts selected should be appropriate for the cohort of students and should lend themselves to discussion.

In addition, some students repeatedly experienced difficulty in expanding on or justifying opinions.

Communication: Demonstrated capacity to maintain and effectively and appropriately advance the exchange, and clarity of expression

Choosing topics and sub-topics that suit students' interests and levels of proficiency is crucial. Some students tend to choose difficult or rare topics to demonstrate their unique choice. This is acceptable as long as the topics they choose conform to the study design and are related to the Chinese-speaking community. However, some students were not able to construct the content at their own level and instead pieced information together. Some students did not choose appropriate topics to extend their explanation. Topics chosen such as exam pressure, the advantages of living in the city versus the country, and study life, are not specific to the Chinese community and thus are barely related to the requirements of the Chinese Second Language Advanced Detailed Study.

Students are expected to voice their opinion on topics and support their arguments with relevant information.

Although the one-minute introduction is not assessed, it is recommended that students outline their topic and aspects clearly and logically.

Content: Capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic

The average performance levels on this criterion were not as good as other sections. Students who performed well prepared their Detailed Study logically and sequentially and were able to recount their knowledge of the subject, their opinions, and their own analyses. Using resources such as books, movies, and documentaries would support students' study. Support material, such as photographs or diagrams, is allowed, however it should be presented during the one-minute introduction.

Only a few students were unable to answer the questions related to the topic they had chosen. They need to understand that the discussion should be an analysis of their chosen texts rather than an introduction of a broad topic. It is recommended that students focus on a particular topic or sub-topic. Students also need to learn how to keep both depth and breadth in balance within the seven-minute discussion.



Some students obviously compiled the information from their resources and references. When asked what they had learned from the resources and references, they either could not connect with the topic they had chosen or responded that this was not a part of their research.

Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Students who performed well in this criterion selected a topic that interested them and a language level that suited their ability. Generally speaking, students had prepared well for this criterion, although a few students made mistakes with sentence structure and grammatical patterns.

Most students had prepared well in terms of sentence structure and sequencing. However, some students were not able to appropriately link passages. Therefore their language levels were quite unbalanced.

Students should be aware that following their initial answers, assessors will often ask further questions. Rote-learned passages will not help students to cope with spontaneous questions.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, students in 2008 found the Chinese Second Language Advanced examination challenging, mainly due to the introduction of translation for the first time in this year's examination (Section 2, Part C – Translation). Most students struggled with the translation; however the majority coped well with the rest of the examination. All questions on the examination were answered adequately and most students demonstrated effective time management, completing all sections of the examination within the specified time.

Most students appeared to be familiar with the format of the examination and almost all were able to respond in the appropriate language for each section. No marks were awarded to answers in the wrong language. There were again students who did not read all instructions carefully. Students should remember that the amount of space given to answer a particular question on the examination paper is a good indication of the length of the anticipated answer. The number of marks allocated to each question usually corresponds to the number of points needed in the answer. Students should also check to see if a question requires them to present their answer in point form or in full sentences, as students are required to answer in full sentences in Chinese for Section 1 – Listening and responding, Part B, and Section 2 – Reading and responding, Part B.

Some students simply copied one or two paragraphs from the original reading passage as their response to a question in Section 2 – Reading and responding. Students often did not achieve the highest possible mark due to insufficient information given to complete the requirements of the task. It has been stressed that students should not provide information beyond the scope of the question and that they should not include prior knowledge of the topic if it is not included in the texts. Students are advised to improve their skills of analysis and summarising.

Many students could understand the newly-introduced translation tasks well and made good attempts. Some students seemed to understand the Chinese task, but were unable to translate it into appropriate English. Students are advised that they should not translate word for word from Chinese.

The majority of students answered all questions satisfactorily in Section 2 – Reading and responding, despite some questions in this section being quite challenging. However, quite a few students did not read the questions carefully and provided answers only when they comprehended the questions. It seemed that most students needed to improve their skills in analysing information and summarising rather than copying out the whole paragraph or passage. Teachers and students must understand that analysis and evaluation skills, as well as comprehension skills, are required in this section. The questions in this section may require students to look at the whole passage to gain an answer, not only one sentence or paragraph. Students are also advised to consult their dictionaries when answering questions as many of their responses contained spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

Most students showed a strong ability to complete Section 3 – Writing in Chinese. They completed tasks in a correct register, format and style. However, some students need to ensure that they read all instructions carefully and follow the requirements of the task.



In this section, the majority of students chose Question 18 or 19 for their writing task. Most students who chose Question 18 produced a good piece of writing, but quite a few students did not comprehend Question 19 fully as it also required students to provide reasons why it was not good to have their holidays in the mountains this summer vacation. In terms of content, some students lost balance between breadth and depth. In addition, a few students did not adhere to the formats required for the different writing styles and text types. Students should be advised to develop a plan before they start the writing task. Students should also be aware that the word length is strictly limited to 250–300 Chinese characters and should avoid exceeding this limit (credit is not given for writing that exceeds the word limit) or submitting responses without sufficient words to provide sufficient content.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Many students appeared to understand the two listening texts well and demonstrated their ability to summarise and analyse information. However, some students seemed to have trouble conveying their meaning in English. Students should use the reading time to focus on the questions in this section so they can estimate what the listening is about. Students should also learn note-taking skills and provide as much relevant information as possible when answering each question. Most questions contained two or three aspects that needed to be answered, but some students only focused on one aspect of the question and missed the rest of the details.

Text 1

Question 1

- The weather in the East is mostly fine.
- The wind is at 4–5 knots (or level or times of strong wind, wind ranging from levels 4–5, strong 4–5 degree winds, wind at magnitude 4–5, gale of level 4–5).

Text 2

Question 2

- at the beginning of the school party (soirée)
- because he is part (a member) of the school band (music team or group)
- the school band is going to perform at the beginning of the party (soirée)

Part B – Answer in Chinese

In this part of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand aspects of a Chinese listening text by responding in Chinese. Most students showed a sound understanding of the content of the text.

In this part of the examination, three marks were awarded for comprehension of the text and two marks were awarded for conveying information accurately and appropriately in Chinese.

Most students did well in this part. However, students must ensure that they respond in complete sentences and their sentences should communicate their ideas in their own words. Some students answered in point form, taking extracts directly from the spoken text. They did not demonstrate their ability to communicate fluently in the language and thus were not awarded full marks. Some students needed to ensure that they provided a full answer to each question.

Question 3

- 因为要考试了，她放学后要上数学(补习)课，她不想错过这个机会。

Question 4

- 她星期六上午去打工，因为(那时)是电脑店最忙的时候(需要人手)。

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Most students successfully completed the questions relating to the comprehension of a Chinese reading text in this part of the examination. Section 2, Part A, carried 15 marks based on one text in Chinese. A number of questions were



directly related to the content of the text, while other questions were deductive. As stressed previously, students should be prepared to comment not only on the content of the text, but also on the purpose of the text and the type of audience it is addressing.

Some students misunderstood Questions 7, 9 and 10. In order to prepare for this section of the examination, students should read extensively in Chinese, including a wide range of different text types. They should also practise identifying and summarising the main points and ideas in the texts.

Students are also advised that they should read over the text a few times before attempting the questions. It is not necessary to know the meaning of all unknown words if they are not key words in the text and students should try to understand the gist of the passage. Students are also reminded that all answers must be based on the information provided in the text and not on prior knowledge.

Text 4

Question 5

He had lived in the well all his life/since he was born (he had never left the well).

Question 6

The well is 1000 miles (kilometres/very far) away from the East Sea.

Question 7

The well is the whole world to the frog.

Question 8

The little turtle lost his way and accidentally (carelessly) fell into the well and met the frog.

Question 9

The frog thought that the turtle's place was not as good as his place and the turtle wanted (was looking for) a new home.

Question 10

The place where the frog lives is spacious (commodious, wide or roomy) but also comfortable (cosy) and his place is bigger than the sky (world).

Question 11

He has never learnt that the outside world is much bigger and more interesting (fun).

Question 12

An accidental meeting

Question 13

One should not be opinionated and make a judgement with prejudice (in ignorance) or without consultation with others (or boastful).

Part B – Answer in Chinese

This part of the examination assessed students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of the text and their capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately in Chinese. Most students provided the correct information to adequately complete all questions. Students should take advantage of the fact that the questions in this section are given in both Chinese and English.

Text 5

Question 14

因为他

- 地位很高
- 是个著名的外交官
- 当过美国的部长



Question 15

他

- 在北京美国大使馆担任过商务秘书
- 代表美国访问过中国很多次

- 中国的电视、报纸也经常采访他

Question 16

他

- 常常查字典
- 认真练习会话，在北京工作时，常常和朋友们用中文交谈

Question 17

- 他的儿子和女儿都在学汉语
- 他的女婿是中国人

Part C – Translation

Part C – Translation was introduced into the examination this year. Most students could comprehend the translation passages well and convey the meaning of these passages accurately and fluently. Some students seemed to have a good comprehension of the passages in Chinese, but had poor expression in English. Students are reminded that Chinese and English are different in terms of syntax and expression and they should not translate word for word from Chinese.

Question 18

Travelling to Xihu/West Lake to sightsee from Shanghai, one can catch a train or a tour bus apart from (besides/in addition to) driving. Driving is fairly fast, taking only a day to return/taking one day for the return journey. Of course, driving alone is tiring, while catching public transport is much more relaxing.

Question 19

‘Courtesy demands reciprocity’ is a custom in almost every country. However, the way of expressing courtesy is different from country to country. People in the West open presents/gifts in front of the giver when they receive it, because they want to express appreciation and gratitude to the guest. However, Chinese people do not open the present immediately in front of the guest when they receive it. They open the present only after the guest leaves, because they think the most important thing is not the gift itself but the affection of the giver. The Chinese term is that ‘affection is more important than the gift’.

Question 20

The Silk Road in China began in around 200 BC of Qin and Han Dynasties. The Emperors of the then Han Dynasty appointed ambassadors to establish a diplomatic and military relationship with the West. They brought with them a lot of silk and other special Chinese products, thereby beginning the famous Silk Road of Chinese history.

Section 3 – Writing in Chinese

This section assessed the students’ ability to express ideas through the creation of original text in Chinese using the following criteria:

- relevance, breadth and depth
- appropriateness of structure and sequence
- accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

Students were required to write 250–300 characters in Chinese on one of the five topics given. Each topic represented a different text type and style of writing (personal, imaginative, informative, persuasive and evaluative). All five questions were attempted by students, although there was a clear preference for personal and informative writing tasks.

Students, on the whole, displayed a good knowledge of the different characteristics of the text type and the style of writing they chose. However, students must be aware that they need to provide all the features of the text type or writing style as required.

Of the three criteria in this section, students did not perform well against ‘relevance, breadth and depth’. When selecting a topic, students should choose one that is familiar to them and one that requires the kind of writing and text type that



suits them best. The selected topic should be one that students have a good knowledge of, and a good range of relevant vocabulary, and one in which they are able to express themselves accurately.

Question 22

This question required students to write a diary entry about their reflections on their quarrel with a sibling in order to improve their relationship. Students should tell what happened and provide at least two detailed suggestions for improving the relationship with the sibling.

Capable students exhibited very good skills in this topic. They were able to provide some detail about what happened and give good suggestions for improving the relationship. However, some students only provided details of what happened without giving any suggestions on how to improve the relationship.

Question 22

In this informal speech students were expected to introduce at least three activities that the Youth Club could offer. Students were also expected to provide detailed information about these three activities to new club members.

This question produced a number of very good responses. Many students who attempted the question were able to adopt the required informative approach and display the appropriate conventions of a speech. They drew from their own experiences as members of clubs and successfully communicated to their audience the activities that the club could offer. However, some students only mentioned three activities without giving any explanation about why these three activities should have been introduced by the club.

Question 23

In this imaginative story students were expected to develop a plot about an accident that happened at the Australian Exhibition Centre during the World Exhibition Fair in 2010 in Shanghai.

Only a few students chose this topic and those who did handled it competently. These students were skilled in the devices of storytelling; they created an appropriate time, place and atmosphere and their ideas were well-organised in sentences and paragraphs that linked well. However, many responses to this question were predictable and lacking in creativity and originality. Quite a few students demonstrated a lack of imagination, little plot development and poor descriptions of setting and characters. In addition, a poor range of vocabulary and understanding of language structure often contributed to a weaker story line.

Question 24

In this review students were expected to evaluate in some detail at least two positive and two negative aspects of a Chinese restaurant near their school.

Many students selected this topic for their writing task and most observed the conventions, content and style appropriate for a formal report. Students were able to draw from their experiences and successfully discuss and evaluate positive and negative aspects of a restaurant. They provided ideas that were well organised in sentences and paragraphs that linked well. However, some students could not provide a sufficient analysis when evaluating the positive and negative aspects of the restaurant. Some students seemed to have a limited vocabulary for this writing task.

Question 25

This question required students to write a formal letter to their local government in an attempt to persuade the local government to improve traffic conditions around their school. Students were expected to present at least three persuasive arguments and to provide convincing suggestions for improvement.

Most students who chose this topic were able to give convincing arguments and suggestions for the improvement of traffic conditions around the school. They adopted the correct register and tone required for a formal letter. However, some students were unable to express themselves fully and appeared confused about the different features between a Chinese and English letter. Some students also displayed a tendency to use informal address, salutations and sign off.