

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/01
Speaking

Key messages

Candidates should use appropriately advanced vocabulary and grammar.
Candidates need to improve the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation.
Candidates should explore Japan related themes in their presentation and make clear reference to Japanese culture or society.
Candidates need to make sure that they use appropriately polite language towards the Examiner during the conversation. Language heard and repeated from the internet and films is likely to be highly informal and inappropriate in other contexts.

General comments

Most candidates had prepared a good presentation related to the culture of Japan. They demonstrated good knowledge of the topic area they had chosen. Some candidates could have done with a clearer focus on Japan or its culture. Sometimes the weakest candidates had prepared sentences which were far too ambitious for their language ability, and struggled to say these properly during the presentation.

In the conversation sections, candidates were well aware that they should be taking the initiative to develop longer, fuller answers; and also to be asking the teacher questions. The efforts they made in these two regards were good. Most were able to state their own opinions, and the strongest candidates were able to engage the Examiner in discussion.

Some candidates struggled to speak using correct pronunciation and intonation. Sometimes the influence of the candidate's first language was evident, for example some candidates found it difficult to distinguish between two sounds in Japanese, or needed to be more aware of the importance of long and short vowels in Japanese.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

Most candidates had chosen a subject of personal interest and it was clear that they had carried out some research about Japan in preparation. Candidates should be advised not to choose topics that are too wide. Topics should be sufficiently narrow so that the candidate can give reasonable coverage to it within the time limit. Some candidates introduced their presentation with 'I am going to talk about X' at the beginning, which is a very clear way to start. Candidates are also encouraged to include their own opinions or comparisons with their own country in their presentations.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Candidates were able to engage in conversation using a wide variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Most candidates seemed to have the language to express their ideas; only occasionally did a candidate seem to struggle to find the language to express what they were thinking. This is a reasonably high level of linguistic competence. Many candidates were also able to turn the conversation naturally to asking questions of the Examiner, and to expand what they were saying into debates involving personal opinions. Candidates should be encouraged to use phrases which facilitate 'turn taking' in a conversation, particularly some of the polite Japanese phrases for expressing doubt or disagreement. Pronunciation and intonation were generally good.

Section 3: General Conversation

Candidates generally engaged well, with only the weakest candidates struggling to give the Examiner anything to develop into a conversation. The stronger candidates were able to give long and detailed answers to the questions, and also used questions or comments to steer the direction of the conversation.

It was evident once again that the language used by a number of candidates was influenced by their exposure to Japanese films or anime. The language used in these genres is highly informal, and often inappropriate to be used in an oral examination. Candidates needed to be mindful that language from one situation does not always apply in another; an awareness of the complexities of Japanese register was needed in these cases.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

Question 1: a multiple choice question in which candidates must identify the word (or words) with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;

Question 2: make a sentence with the provided grammatical changes;

Question 3 and Question 4: candidates should formulate answers with their own words and refrain from copying from the text;

Question 5: respect 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

Candidate performance was very good this year. In particular, many candidates responded well to **Q5(a)**. The topic of travelling to Japan was well-understood, but candidates needed to be careful to root their answers in the information given in the passages, rather than their own personal experience of the subject.

Many candidates attempted to include kanji from the AS level list, and showed skill in writing those kanji. Others relied heavily on using just hiragana, and should be encouraged to use kanji in their writing. In a few cases, candidates included English in their answer, which is not permitted in this Japanese exam.

It should be noted that marks are also available in **Question 3** and **Question 4** for Quality of Language. In order to score highly, candidates need to show that they can use their own language to reformulate information given in the passages. Candidates may use the passages as support to retrieve some vocabulary, but should not lift material from the passages indiscriminately or at length, as this does not show that they have fully understood either the passages or the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

The purpose of this exercise was to seek the meaning of a word in the text. The majority of candidates managed to identify 4 or 5 correct answers in this vocabulary exercise. Part (d) was answered incorrectly more than other parts in the question, with candidates commonly choosing answer 3.

Question 2

Most candidates managed to write a sentence using the grammar structure identified in the passage, and some successfully used a variety of kanji. Sentences can be short, but they need to make sense using the grammar structure provided as well as being grammatically correct. Both polite form and plain form are accepted. The sentence provided must be one they have created themselves; candidates will not be rewarded for copying out a sentence from passage which contains the grammatical structure. Candidates need to be familiar with the IGCSE and AS Level grammar syllabus to prepare for this exercise.

- (i) e.g. うちの犬は私にとって家族と同じです。
The majority of candidates managed to produce a correct sentence for this exercise.

- (ii) e.g. 母は私にごはんを作ってくれます。
Most candidates responded to this question and produced an appropriate sentence using the TE form properly. Common incorrect answers included: ぼくは 海に行ってくれます。かのじょは私にペンをあげてくれました。 and ケーキは食べてくれました。
- (iii) e.g. 音楽を聞くのが好きです。
For this question, any plain verb + のは/のが/のを structure was creditable. However, many candidates used のが. Some candidates did not attempt this question at all. In some cases the sentences produced by candidates did not make sense, such as 映画館に行くのが映画を見ません。パンと ケーキのが食べられます。 or ふじ山のが見ることができます。
- (iv) e.g. テストはとてもむずかしいんです。
There was a variety of acceptable grammar usage for this question as it is an んです structure, although most candidates used TA forms, such as 教えたんです。勉強したんです。思ったんです。 Some candidates needed to remember to add ん after a plain form verb. Others confused the TA form with んだ, for example in 読んだ/飲んだ/住んだ and a few candidates mixed it up with たいへんだ. Students who used い or な adjectives composed some very interesting sentences.
- (v) e.g. 子どもはジュースを飲みたがっています。
This question had the highest number of no responses. This structure required the third person to be the subject and it was evident that candidates who used 私 were not aware of this, as in, 私はごはんを食べたがります。

Question 3

The majority of candidates performed very well this year. In **Questions 3 and 4**, candidates need to show clear evidence of understanding: it is expected that candidates will rephrase the passage to express their answers in their own words and that they will not lift answers from the passages directly.

There were more instances this year of candidates answering questions from their own general knowledge or experience. It is important that candidates understand that they should not write their own opinions and ideas for this exercise as the answers have to be drawn from information provided in the passage, expressed in their own words.

Candidates should endeavour to write their answers as neatly as possible to ensure that examiners can read what is written and therefore give credit to acceptable answers. It is not necessary to use the polite form in the answers; answers can be written in the plain form or in note form, depending on the requirements of the question.

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to provide a correct answer to this question, with many scoring the full 2 marks. Answers needed to include the word *visa* and some expression of the fact that it is easier to obtain to be awarded the mark.
- (b) Most candidates were able to respond to this question using their own words. Some candidates wrote about visas or credit cards mainly being for Japanese people, which did not answer the question correctly.
- (c) Many candidates managed to respond to this question well, although a few candidates did not respond at all. Candidates who did not manage to get full marks needed to mention the tour bus. Some candidates only stated which paragraph contained the information, which was not sufficient. A few candidates confused 博品館 with つきじ. Candidates are expected to explain why 博品館 is popular from reading the passage. Therefore, candidates who wrote that there was a toy section or game section did not answer the question fully.
- (d) Most candidates answered this question correctly and some of them tried hard to paraphrase the idea of 70%, such as 七割 or 十人に七人. A few candidates wrote the wrong kanji in their answers, for example 込んでいます instead of こんでいます.

- (e) Many candidates managed to get 1 or 2 marks here. In order to respond to this question fully, candidates needed to mention what people *can do* at Tsukiji Market. Candidates needed to use a verb in their answers to describe the activities on offer (e.g. eating sushi).
- (f) The majority of candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Candidates who did not receive full marks wrote answers such as, 店員は英語で説明してくれました。 or 店員の英語が上手だからです。
- (g) Many candidates performed well on this question, although it was omitted by some. Candidates who did not receive full marks commonly needed to mention that Yamashita-san learnt English from other people. Some answered that tourists had taught him English, which is incorrect. Others wrote about *why* he had learnt English instead of *how* he learnt.
- (h) (i) Many candidates wrote about Japan's world ranking in terms of foreign tourists instead of writing that Japan still attracts a small number of tourists each year.
(ii) Many candidates responded to this question appropriately. Candidates needed to be careful not to use the past tense, as this question asked how things were going to change in the future.

Passage Two

Question 4

The majority of candidates performed extremely well in this section and attempted to answer each question. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the passage thoroughly and then reading each question carefully in order to give themselves the best chance of scoring highly.

- (a) (i) Many candidates managed to respond to this question appropriately.
(ii) Most candidates received 1 mark for this question. Those who did not provided answers such as: 外国人観光客は日本の店のサービスが今すばらしいと思うからです or サービスをもっとよくするためです and 日本中心のサービスに不満を持っています and so on.
- (b) The majority of candidates managed to score 2 or 3 marks for this question. In some cases, candidates provided the expected answer for **Question (c)** in answer to **Question (b)**. For example, 自分の国にめずらしいものを使わ なければいけないです。 Candidates needed to read the question very carefully. There were several possible answers available, so ample opportunity to score full marks. Some candidates wrote about free internet or about being unable to use credit cards or about being dissatisfied with service in Japan, which did not answer the question.
- (c) Candidates seemed to struggle to rephrase their answers to this question, and as a result there were a lot of ambiguous answers, such as 日本 語がわからないとき or 日本の文化について and 食べ方です。
- (d) Many candidates successfully scored 3 full marks for this question. Others needed to be careful to include key words in their answers which related to the key concept required. For example, the word 'gesture' was important to include or explain.
- (e) This question was also answered very well by the majority of candidates. A few candidates needed to mention either about free internet or credit cards.
- (f) (i) This question was the least well-answered among candidates as many candidates answered with, for example, 日本人のニーズに合わせていました or 問題は少なくないです, which does not answer the question adequately.
(ii) This question was omitted by some candidates, but those candidates who provided an answer did so with well-connected sentences.

Question 5

The vast majority of candidates answered this question well and demonstrated a good understanding of both passages. There was clear evidence that candidates had prepared for this exercise and many were able to produce clear written Japanese, using their own words in their responses. 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.

Candidates should be aware of how to use 原稿用紙 and answers should be written neatly and horizontally. Candidates are required to write their answers in the spaces provided; if they decide to change a response and need to write it somewhere else on the question paper, it is helpful for Examiners if they indicate in the original response area that this is the case.

- (a) The majority of candidates managed to identify content points from the passages relating to things that foreign tourists enjoy about travelling to Japan and the problems they may experience. Some candidates had clearly been to Japan themselves and wrote about their own experience instead of using information from the passages, which should be avoided in part (a).

Candidates need to be aware that Chinese characters are not always identical to those used in Japanese, and should not use the two interchangeably. This sometimes made it difficult to understand the message they were trying to get across in their writing. Some candidates were clearly able to produce a good level of written Japanese but did not manage to respond to the question well enough or include enough points to receive a high mark.

- (b) This question invited candidates to discuss the type of good service they had experienced either abroad, or on holiday. Many candidates related their own experience of good service, telling interesting stories relating to service in different countries. Some candidates did not answer this part of the question, saying that they had not visited Japan. Others wrote about aspects of a country they enjoyed (e.g. Japanese food), which is not related to the idea of service.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high level to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it difficult to structure their ideas grammatically to communicate clearly in written Japanese. Mistakes with particles are still common, and it is important for candidates to master the correct use of particles to ensure they can communicate their answers clearly. Candidates need to pay attention to which tense they are using in their writing, and need to be very careful with ㄱ ㄴ adjectives, including negatives, and past forms.

In terms of the number of characters allowed in **Question 5**, candidates who showed good knowledge of the kanji in the syllabus were less likely to exceed the character limit as they did not have to rely on writing in hiragana.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03
Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- practise grammatical structures to express negative ideas.
- address the specific question asked rather than the general topic area.
- plan and structure essays to support a clear line of argument.
- be aware that there are different versions of characters, and make sure they use the Japanese ones.

General comments

Candidates seemed well aware that they needed to use a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary in their writing, and most made a good effort to do so. Candidates should aim to use a good range of correctly written kanji – some candidates used very few, whilst others needed a greater awareness that Japanese characters are not necessarily identical to those used in other countries. Candidates could generally write positive sentences correctly, but some had difficulty in producing grammatically correct negative sentences. For example, “生活習慣病がある機会が少なくなる” – does not convey the meaning intended by the candidate.

Candidates generally used logical paragraphs which made a point. However, some essays needed to include a clearer overall conclusion. Where candidates attempted to write one paragraph *for* and another *against* a theme before coming to a conclusion, the overall flow was sometimes lost as the links between the paragraphs were not clear enough.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 食べ物と飲み物

若いときから健康的な食事をすることは、大切だと思いますか。あなたは自分の食べる物や飲む物に特に気をつけていることがありますか。それはどうしてですか。

This question was very popular. Many candidates wrote a general piece on healthy eating, including things like the importance of eating fruit and vegetables, but did not pick up the key point in the question which was the importance of having a healthy diet *from childhood*. Only a minority of candidates focussed on aspects such as laying down good eating habits for life, building a strong body and preventing life-style diseases later in life. It seemed that many candidates had prepared for this topic by learning some facts about the Japanese diet and were determined to include these facts in their essays. Candidates should be reminded to read the question carefully and to keep their responses relevant to the question.

Question 2 機会の平等

あなたの国では、あなたの国の人と外国人は同じ条件で働いていますか。

Most candidates had a good store of anecdotal evidence that they were able to use to support the case they were trying to make. Many candidates used the argumentative structure “On the one hand.... On the other”, with the most successful of these going on to reach a single conclusion. Some essays needed to signal more clearly how the different parts of the essay related to the whole.

Question 3 スポーツ

スポーツを楽しむためには、プロとアマチュアとどちらの方がいいと思いますか。それぞれのいい点と悪い点をふくめて、あなたの考えを書いてください。

This essay was generally well tackled, partly because the question clearly stated that candidates should consider both good and bad points. The number of candidates arguing that professional sport was more enjoyable was roughly equal to the number arguing the opposite. Some candidates needed to refer to the question more closely, and include aspects about enjoying sport, rather than producing a much broader essay comparing amateur and professional sport in general.

Question 4 社会と経済の発展

年々、お年よりの人口がふえています。このことで、経済や社会の発展のしかたは変わったと思いますか。

Most candidates who tackled this question seemed to have some knowledge about the ageing society, as their use of specific terminology and statistics was good. The question asked candidates to discuss the topic with reference to society or the economy, and candidates needed to focus and structure their essay very well to make a clear, unambiguous argument.

Question 5 環境維持

動物園の中には、数の少なくなった動物をふやすことに成功している所があります。このことに、あなたは賛成ですか反対ですか。それは、どうしてですか。

Candidates were equally split as to whether they agreed with the statement or disagreed with it. Most candidates were able to make two or three points either for or against the statement, but sometimes they needed a greater range of specific vocabulary, such as "breeding". Weaker essays displayed a tendency to veer off onto the general theme of environmental protection; whilst this was a valid point to make in the essay, sometimes candidates lost focus and ended up discussing recycling etc. which was not relevant to the question.