

# JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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**Paper 8281/01**  
**Speaking**

## **Key messages**

- Candidates should prepare their presentation on a topic related to Japan or Japanese culture which is of interest to them.
- Candidates should try to learn interesting and advanced vocabulary on their chosen topic, but be careful not to make it too difficult for themselves, as this can lead to difficulty in manipulating the language in their presentations.
- Candidates should actively seek to engage the Examiner in conversation.
- Candidates should be encouraged to not only prepare their presentation, but also anticipate some of the directions the topic conversation might take, and think about what they might contribute to the conversation.

## **General comments**

Most candidates were able to speak with good pronunciation and intonation, and were able to sustain the conversation with the Examiner for the duration of the examination, without long gaps or hesitations. Candidates are encouraged to continue to work on their speaking skills in this way. Candidates often mentioned in their Speaking Tests that they spoke in Japanese with friends or other native speakers: candidates should be encouraged to continue to seek opportunities to practise their Japanese in this way.

Most candidates were able to present their own experiences and opinions. In general, they found it harder to ask questions and seek the opinion of the Examiner on aspects of the issues they were discussing. Candidates could do with further practise on strategies for engaging the listener in the conversation and for asking questions.

Candidates should also take the opportunity to expand their answers as much as possible. In the general conversation section, sometimes when candidates were asked reasonably predictable questions about their families, schools or hobbies, they only gave a one sentence answer: this sometimes gave the impression that they had learnt that set answer in their first few months of Japanese, and had not revisited it as their language skills improved.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### ***Section 1: Presentation***

Most candidates had well-prepared and well-structured presentations. The best presentations were those on topics which had clearly interested the candidate, where the candidate was able to compare and contrast Japan with their own country, or give their own opinion on a social phenomenon in Japan. Examiners appropriately intervened to stop candidates where the presentation was too long.

### ***Section 2: Topic Conversation***

A significant minority of candidates seemed to have little to add to their presentation and repeated information they had already given. It is worth candidates trying to think about what sort of questions they might be asked by the Examiner in the topic conversation, and preparing some further information and discussion points.

Many candidates were able to use a range of grammatical structures to express their own opinions in answer to the Examiner's questions.

**Section 3: General Conversation**

Generally the questions asked by the Examiner seemed to be accessible, so it was surprising that some candidates did not grab the opportunity to speak more. Candidates should be encouraged to expand their opinions and give more information wherever possible.

There was also a slight tendency for the conversation to sound more like a series of questions with responses rather than a genuine conversation. Candidates need to develop skills to ask relevant questions, seek the Examiner's opinion, and deal with unexpected responses as part of a genuine conversation.

# JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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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

Candidates performed well in this paper and showed that they had a confident grasp of the Japanese language. This year, the theme which spanned the two reading passages was disability, both within the context of professional sport and in the more everyday situation of studying. This seemed to be challenging for some, although many candidates tried to understand the context in positive ways and managed to answer the questions well.

Many candidates tried to use the AS level kanji in their writing, some with great success. However, there were still some candidates who used a lot of hiragana, and others who had difficulty in spelling katakana words correctly. Candidates should be reminded to use kanji where it is appropriately needed in their writing.

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 is to seek the meaning of a word in the text. The majority of candidates were awarded four or five marks. Question (b) proved to be the most challenging question.

#### **Question 2**

The vast majority of candidates were able to write a sentence using the grammar structure identified, and many also used a good number of kanji in their answers. In a small number of cases, candidates did not attempt to answer every question. Candidates' answers can be brief, but they need to produce a sentence using the structure which makes sense and is grammatically correct in order to be awarded the mark. They can garner the appropriate meaning of the grammatical structure by referring back to the reading passage. Answers can be written in either polite form or plain form. Candidates should check their answers carefully to avoid careless spelling mistakes, such as hard sounds or kanji with the same reading but different meaning.

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. かつこいいしあたまがいしいですね。  
Most candidates managed to use the grammar correctly to produce a good sentence.  
  
Many candidates used a variety of adjectives with...し...し... A common mistake was to omit the い for い adjectives, like やさしし or not to change な to だ, as in きれいし.
- (ii) e.g. 先生にはめられました。  
This was found to be the most challenging question, and the lowest scoring in this section. Candidates needed to produce a passive sentence to gain the mark, but many produced a potential sentence instead. Some candidates missed out the verb to form the passive as in られます. Candidates also sometimes had difficulty in using particles accurately, like 妹が私のご飯を食べられました。
- (iii) e.g. めったにテレビを見ません。  
This question was well-answered among those candidates who attempted it, although it was frequently omitted, suggesting unfamiliarity with the grammar point. Most candidates produced their own sentence using the grammar confidently.
- (iv) e.g. ごはんを食べないでねました。  
Many candidates managed to use the ない form correctly and produced interesting sentences. A common error was to produce the ない form with ください sentences.
- (v) Please note that due to an issue with question 2(v) full marks have been awarded to all candidates for this question in order that no candidate is disadvantaged.

### 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 answer this correctly.
- (b) Most candidates were able to respond to this question in their own words. Some candidates wrote about getting injured, without mentioning how this happened, which did not answer the question fully. A small number of candidates wrote 故事 instead of 事故, which has a different meaning. Candidates must be careful to check their answers in order to avoid such mistakes.
- (c) The majority of candidates managed to respond to this question well. Candidates who did not gain full marks mentioned that basketball was 'cool' or 'strong', rather than including anything relating to speed or that when playing it you can forget about having a disability.
- (d) Many candidates received two or three marks and some tried hard to write their answers using their own words.

Candidates who just wrote that there were differences between the United States and Japan without giving examples did not receive any marks for this question. In some cases candidates mixed up positive and negative sentences, which resulted in the wrong message being given.

- (e) Many candidates received full marks for this question and a variety of answers were given. Some common mistakes amongst candidates were 日本の学生にスピーチをします、トレーニングプログラムを始めます、障害者を手伝います、and so on, but the most common was プロジェクトマネージャーになりました
- (f) The majority of candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Candidates who did not receive full marks wrote answers such as, ゆめを持つこと。or ゆめをつかむこと。

### Passage Two

#### Question 4

Many candidates were able to respond to all of the questions and a good performance was seen.

Once again, some questions were omitted by candidates. Candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions to give themselves the opportunity to score marks. It is important that candidates read the passage thoroughly and then read each question carefully to ensure they understand what is required.

- (a) Most candidates managed to respond to this question well and many were awarded three or four marks. Many candidates wrote 自立になりたいです。

A few candidates gave incorrect answers such as:

ヘルパーをさがします/アルバイトをみつけます/家から  
近い大学に行きたいです/目が自由に自立がほしいです and so on.

- (b) A lot of candidates managed to get two marks for this question. The most common mistake among candidates was answering with 明子さんにおこずかいをあげます when the subject for this question should not be Akiko. Candidates also needed to be careful to avoid particle mistakes in this question.
- (c) Most candidates received one mark and could identify that Akiko wanted a part-time job. The candidates who did not gain both marks needed to include something about *saving* pocket money rather than just receiving pocket money. A few candidates' discussed *why* Akiko wanted to make money instead of *how*. Candidates should once again be reminded of the importance of reading the question carefully.
- (d) Many candidates received two or three marks for this question. Quite a few candidates made mistakes in kanji, e.g. 相談, for 想談 or 冗談 or 商談. A minority of candidates wrote their own opinion or ideas for this question rather than referring to the text, for example, 子どものことを考えない親はいない。
- (e) This question was well-answered by the majority of candidates, with many receiving full marks.

#### 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 extract points from the text about how disabled people would like to be understood. Some candidates just wrote about the characters from the passages, Ito-san and Akiko-san, rather than more broadly about disabled people in general. A few candidates wrote from their knowledge, rather than from the passage, which could not be credited.
- (b) Most candidates managed to respond well to this question, discussing points such as the support given by the government, or that people in society are welcoming and helpful. In some cases candidates mentioned why disabled people might find it difficult to live in their town or country, giving reasons for this. A few candidates did not seem to fully understand the main focus of the question, and instead wrote about young people or foreign people in their country.

### 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 in their own words in written Japanese. Candidates continue to need to improve their use of particles, as mistakes with particles sometimes caused difficulty in understanding what candidates were trying to say, or changed the meaning of the sentence from what was intended. Candidates also need to be careful not to mix the polite and plain form sentences, or to mix up 私, ぼく and おれ. In addition, おれ is not appropriate for AS level writing.

Candidates should be encouraged to attempt to use kanji from the IGCSE and AS Level defined content lists, rather than relying solely on hiragana. This is especially important in **Question 5**, where using hiragana instead of kanji uses up valuable character space in the word limit, and can prevent candidates from fitting in enough content points.

# JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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**Paper 8281/03**  
**Essay**

## Key messages

In order to perform well, candidates should

- Address the specific question asked rather than the general topic area.
- Give a clear structure to the argument, signalling this structure using connectives.
- Make sure that they write Japanese characters.
- Write in either plain form or polite form, but avoid mixing the two.

## General comments

Most candidates were able to use a wide range of vocabulary, including some harder, topic specific words such as 爆買い or ポイ捨て. Most candidates wrote using a suitable range of kanji. Some candidates could have improved their work by using more kanji; others needed to take care that they used correct Japanese kanji.

Most candidates set their work out in paragraphs, and each paragraph had a point. Candidates could improve the structure of their work by using connective words to signal the relationship of sentences within paragraphs, and the relationship of each paragraph to the next. Generally candidates did better when they wrote several paragraphs to support one main line of argument rather than attempting to do some points for and some points against. That is not to say they should not write an essay which argues some points for and others against before coming to a conclusion, provided that they are able to clearly indicate the structure of their argument.

Candidates generally used a good range of grammatical structures with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Overall candidates did better to use a smaller range of structures with higher accuracy, than attempting a large range of structures but with less accuracy.

A significant minority of candidates started (or concluded) their essays with statements such as この意見に賛成です or 私もそう思います. Such statements do not make sense as an opening to an essay unless the reader has access to the question. Candidates should write essays which start and conclude appropriately as independent pieces of writing.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1 家族**

両親と十代の子どもの関係は、時代とともに変わってきていると言われています。あなたの意見を書いてください。

Many candidates wrote a general essay about the relationship between teenagers and parents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and missed that the question has asked for a description of how this relationship had changed over time. Some candidates used their own relationship to their parents as an example, and then digressed onto personal narrative and forgot to return to an argument based essay. Candidates should make sure that they address the specific question on the examination paper to score high marks for content.

### Question 2 都会と田舎の生活

都会の小さい家に住むより、いなかの大きい家に住むほうがいいという意見にさんせいですか。それはどうしてですか。

There was a tendency for candidates to write general essays comparing life in the city to life in the countryside, when a focus on the choice between a spacious house in the country side or a cramped house in the city was required.

### Question 3 倫理と宗教

「お金で手に入らないものはない」という意見について、あなたはどのように思いますか。

The candidates who chose this question gave the impression of having definite views on the subject: they were often able to write very interesting, coherent pieces including a lot of their own opinions. In general they were also appropriately neutral in tone and style rather than narrating a personal experience too strongly.

### Question 4 旅行と環境

外国人<sup>かん</sup>観光客がふえると、その国にとっていい点が多いと言われますが、その意見にさんせいですか。どうしてそう思いますか。

This was by far the most popular question. Some candidates wrote entirely in favour of the proposition; others entirely against; whilst still others gave evidence on both sides of the argument before attempting to evaluate and come to an overall conclusion. Any structure was fine so long as the overall logic and flow of the essay were clearly signalled. Candidates sometimes struggled to do this, meaning that the reader noted a range of relevant points, but was finally unsure as to what the candidate's opinion was.

### Question 5 伝統文化

日本ではアニメのえいきょうで、若い人も<sup>でんとう</sup>伝統文化にきょうみを持ち始めました。<sup>でんとう</sup>伝統文化をまもることは大切だと思いませんか。

Most candidates argued that it was important to protect traditional culture, and were able to give several supporting reasons for doing so. Fewer candidates were able to link their argument to the spread of アニメ which was given in the question.