

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 8281/01 Speaking</p>

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.
- Candidates should continue to work on their pronunciation and intonation.
- Candidates should be taught to address the Examiner as 'sensei' rather than 'anata'.

General comments

Most candidates were able to sustain the dialogue with the Examiner for the required length of time, without undue repetition or hesitation. They generally had good strategies to maintain the flow of the dialogue and repair strategies where needed. They were able to produce detailed content on topics that were of personal interest such as career plans, hobbies, school, family and so on, and were able to offer reasoned opinions and detailed information on the topics which they had studied, such as the environment. Candidates generally made a good effort to interest and engage the Examiner in the conversation, although some candidates were unaware that they were required to ask questions as part of the assessment task.

Candidates often mentioned that they used websites, social media or Japanese friends to practise their listening and speaking skills. This is to be encouraged; candidates should take the opportunity to improve their pronunciation and intonation as much as possible by listening to, and interacting with, native speakers. In some cases, candidates were not always able to use the many levels of politeness and formality present in Japanese correctly; the language which they hear on the media may not be appropriate to be simply copied and used in a formal context such as an examination.

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 orals that they spoke in Japanese with friends or other native speakers: candidates should be encouraged to continue to seek opportunities to practice their Japanese in this way.

The overall impression this year was that candidates had mastered a relatively smaller number of grammatical structures, achieving greater confidence and accuracy on a narrower range of language. This did not appear to leave the candidates short on language with which to communicate and gave a greater sense of naturalness and spontaneity in communication.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

The presentations were generally well prepared and interesting. Most candidates came across as being genuinely interested in the aspect of Japan or Japanese culture that they had researched and were presenting. Candidates were able to present some facts that they had researched as well as give their own opinions and were comfortably in control of their material. Examiners appropriately intervened to stop candidates where the presentation was too long.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Candidates were generally able to engage in conversation with the Examiner about the topic they had presented. Weaker responses were often characterised by a tendency to repeat material and needed to be able to offer further information beyond what they had given in the presentation. Candidates should be encouraged to think around the topic and have some further points that they are able to offer the Examiner during the conversation. They could also think about what questions they might like to ask the Examiner on the topic. Most candidates were able to use a range of grammatical structures in this section. Sometimes there was an issue with the vocabulary: if candidates are going to use extremely difficult kanji compound words, they need to ensure that they can pronounce these words properly, or else seek a simpler way of expressing the point.

Section 3: General Conversation

Candidates were generally very willing to talk, and when the Examiner asked them a question, they not only answered it but also developed and expanded their answers. There was a sense of a genuine 'give and take' in a dialogue, with the candidates often naturally asking the Examiner relevant questions in context. It was noticeable that some candidates were using the word 'anata' to address the Examiner, and should be reminded that in the context of an examination, 'sensei' would be more appropriate.

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Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** choose the word (or words) from the options given with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;
- **Question 2:** make a sentence which includes the grammatical structure given in the question; this should be a sentence created by the candidate and not copied from the text.
- **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

Most candidates this year were able to show they had a good level of Japanese. The most successful candidates were those who not only had a solid grasp of the language, but who also showed good examination technique. Taking time to read the questions carefully and understand what each question is asking for is essential in order to respond appropriately and gain all available marks.

Candidates showed they had a good understanding of the texts, which this year were about schools closing in certain parts of Japan and being repurposed for community projects. Candidates displayed good levels of comprehension, understanding aspects of the hidden traditions, cultures and purpose of each building and the impact on local people or visitors, as described in the texts.

Many candidates were able to use kanji from the AS level syllabus. Others still relied on writing predominantly in hiragana and should be encouraged to use kanji in their writing when it is appropriate. Spelling errors in words written in katakana were quite common once again this year.

In order to reach the higher marking bands for quality of language, examiners need to see examples of language that has been generated by the candidate. Most candidates were aware that they should not copy large sections of language directly from the text and should use their own words.

This year there were several examples of scripts which seemed to have been written in pencil and then overwritten in pen or crossed out several times. Whilst examiners will endeavour to read what is written on the script, candidates should be reminded to present work that is legible to ensure that everything they have written can be read and considered by examiners when awarding marks.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

The purpose of this multiple-choice exercise is to identify the meaning of 5 items of vocabulary from the text. The majority of candidates performed well in this exercise, with most scoring 3 or 4 marks. (c) proved to be the most challenging question.

Question 2

Performance on this question was good, and many candidates were able using a variety of kanji in their responses. Candidates are instructed not to use the same sentence as that used in the passage to exemplify the use of the particular grammar item. Some candidates still copied the whole sentence in their answer and therefore could not be credited for this.

Most candidates were able to use the grammar correctly, maintaining the same semantic use of the structure as that of the original text. Candidates need to be reminded that the sentences they produce must not only be grammatically correct but must also make sense. Both polite form and plain form writing are accepted in this question. A high number of errors relating to particles was seen this year. Candidates should check their answers carefully to avoid careless spelling mistakes, such as hard sounds or kanji with the same reading but different meaning.

(i) e.g. 漢字が書けます。

Most candidates managed to use the grammar correctly to produce a simple but appropriate 'potential' sentence. Candidates who did not achieve one mark in this question typically wrote a passive sentence or just added られる such as 勉強られる.

(ii) e.g. ケーキを食べてしまいました。

This question revealed that several candidates were not secure in their use of the te-form and its structures. In some answers, there was also confusion between transitive and intransitive verbs and as a result, the meaning of the sentence became distorted and incorrect particles were used. Despite this, 宿題 or さいふをわすれてしまいました was usually written correctly.

(iii) e.g. それとこれは同じねだんです。

This question had the highest instance of copying from the passage, with many candidates using the same adjective おいしい and just replacing the subject. Weaker responses were characterised by simple spelling mistakes, such as すしい instead of すし, once again underlining the importance of checking answers to avoid such errors.

(iv) e.g. たばこをすうのはよくないです。

The majority of candidates succeeded in producing a clear sentence using the grammar point correctly. Weaker responses lifted heavily from the passage (作るのは) or produced sentences which did not make sense, such as コーヒーを飲むのはあまい.

(v) e.g. しけんはかんたんだったらいいですね。

Responses to this question showed evidence that some candidates had not fully understood the usage of '～たらいい' in the example given in the passage. Several answers therefore used てたら as in アイスを食べてたらいい instead of 食べたらいいい. Weaker responses also contained errors in negative formations such as 雨が降らないたらいい.

Question 3

In **Question 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.

The majority of candidates responded very well and most answers were well presented in both exercises. Candidates need to pay attention to the mark allocation for each question to ensure that the responses they produce are full enough to gain all possible marks.

It is not necessary to use the polite form in answers; answers can be written in the plain form or in note form, depending on the requirements of the question.

- (a) This question was generally well-answered.
- (b) Most candidates were able to respond to this question well. Some candidates made great efforts to use their own words and tried hard to rephrase グラウンド・プール writing 体育の施設 or 設備. In order to gain a mark, responses needed to include more than simply 学校はスポーツ合宿に最適, as a reason was required by the question.
- (c) Most candidates responded to this question well. The most successful answers showed careful reading of the passage to identify the activities people can do in primary schools in *Chiba* rather than Ichihara town. Weaker responses often contained unsuccessful rephrasing of answers such as 写真をとる which has omitted the lesson or mentioned おにぎりを食べる運動会をする.
- (d) A lot of candidates were awarded two marks for this question. Candidates needed to mention that everyone makes new friends, or everyone meets people for the first time.
- (e) Most candidates gained two or three marks for this question. Some efforts were made to rephrase answers, but many answers gave おにぎりを口に運ぶ which is directly lifted from the passage. Some issues relating to inaccurate use of particles were evident in answers to this question.
- (f) This question was found to be challenging by some candidates. The best responses explained the relationship between the schools and local residents and the impact of the re-use programme, rather than simply stating whether the relationship was good / bad / important etc. Weaker responses needed to be more fully supported and were sometimes characterised by description rather than explanation: 住民は毎日楽しい、いろいろな人と友だちになる、学校と住民の関係はいい or 深い.

Passage Two

Question 4

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

Some questions in this section 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) Many candidates responded to this question well and a high number received full marks. A minority of candidates needed to mention 外国人 or 外国から to gain both marks.
- (b) This question was generally well-answered.
- (c) Most candidates were awarded at least one mark for this question. Those who did not gain both marks frequently wrote 昔のよい点を残している and needed to also mention that the design echoed that of a Japanese castle. A few candidates made kanji errors in this question, writing 百 instead of 白.
- (d) Candidates responded well to this question, with many gaining two or three marks. A small number of candidates answered from their experience, or guessed at an answer, such as お客様の荷物を持つ. Candidates should be reminded that answers must be based on the information given in the text.
- (e) This question was also answered well by many candidates. In order to gain all marks, candidates needed to be careful in their reading of the text and question in order to locate the key items.
- (f) This was the lowest scoring question, although almost all candidates attempted an answer. Some common mistakes among candidates were 伝統を守る、世界中から客をむかえることができる.

Question 5

This part of the examination generally produced a relatively lower performance than the previous sections. The most successful responses were those which identified elements of stability and elements of change in buildings and some very thoughtful responses were seen. Some candidates managed to structure their answer well, identifying points from the passages and including them in short, clear sentences. Weaker responses often needed a clearer focus, and in some cases there was no overall sense of what point they were trying to make.

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 a selection of points from the passages about how buildings may change or remain the same over the course of time. Most answers tended to focus on those elements discussed in passage one, although a balanced response covering both passages was produced by stronger candidates. This year there were several instances of candidates including their own ideas in part (a) which were not derived from either passage, such as *'we need to paint our houses when they are old'*, *'all buildings start to have holes'*, or *'houses have cherry blossom'* and so on. Candidates should be reminded that marks can only be awarded where relevant points are made which convey information or ideas from the texts. No marks can be awarded for general knowledge. Candidates need to ensure that they read the question thoroughly and respond to the question asked.
- (b) Many candidates interpreted this question as a choice of staying with their classmates in either a closed school or the Hotel Okura, rather than making a free choice of somewhere they would like to stay. In many cases, this resulted in the facts from the passages being regurgitated once again rather than using this section to introduce their own ideas and opinions. Weaker responses did not include a specific place they would like to stay and simply referred to 'a quiet place' or 'a sport camp' and others omitted to mention their friends in the response. Some key vocabulary items, 同級生 and 泊まる, did not seem to be well-understood.

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.

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

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Paper 8281/03
Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well, candidates should

- Have a specific conclusion to reach in order to answer the question, and structure the whole essay to reach that conclusion.
- Have a clear introduction, conclusion and paragraphs.
- Address the specific question on the paper and not just the general topic area.
- Make sure that they do not mix plain form and polite form, and avoid writing spoken language (such as *とっても*).
- Be encouraged to learn the correct conventions for writing on 原稿用紙.

General comments

Most candidates were able to write an essay of the correct length using a good range of grammar, vocabulary and kanji. Candidates generally seemed very comfortable with the AS Level grammar, vocabulary and kanji they used, although some candidates could improve their writing by using more kanji. Some candidates were able to use an impressive range of topic specific vocabulary.

There was a slight tendency to write on the general topic area rather than on the specific question posed in the examination paper, and quite a few candidates seemed to incorporate material seemingly because they had learnt it and wanted to use it. Candidates must be careful to address the question asked and should only include material that is relevant and contributes to the building of the argument.

The most successful essays showed evidence of planning and were set out in paragraphs. Some candidates made their work look like paragraphs on the page, but when reading the content, the paragraphs did not seem to have any unity.

Although no marks are awarded specifically for how they write on 原稿用紙, candidates should be aware of the conventions of using it: in particular that commas and full stops do not come at the beginning of a line.

Some 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* which can be confusing to the reader, as they do not make sense as openings 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 人間関係

「友達に会って話をするより、ソーシャルメディアを使うほうが便利だ。」
あなたはこの意見をどう思いますか。理由をあげてくわしく説明してください。

Many candidates gave the impression that this was a topic they were very familiar with and wrote confidently and comfortably. In some responses the arguments needed to be more clearly structured, and where writing was presented as an illustrative story, candidates sometimes started to digress from the main point under discussion. Candidates should always make an essay plan and stick to logically building up their argument.

Question 2 法と秩序

「プライバシーより安全のほうが大切なので、国にとって個人情報が必要だ。」
あなたはこの意見をどう思いますか。理由をあげてくわしく説明してください。

Few candidates chose this question. Many of the candidates who tackled this essay seem to have prepared facts about the Japanese criminal justice system, and these were put down in the essay but often uncomfortably: the facts were not always relevant to the question and frequently did not contribute to the argument.

Question 3 仕事と余暇

週休三日制（一週間に四日働いて三日休むシステム）の会社があります。
あなたはこのシステムをどう思いますか。理由をあげてくわしく説明してください。

This question was well answered by many candidates, who expressed strong opinions on the long hours culture as seen in Japan, and suggestions of what to do about it. They were able to integrate different topic areas such as health and economics to produce a reasoned argument.

Question 4 戦争と平和

「21世紀に戦争は必要ない。」あなたはこの意見をどう思いますか。
理由をあげてくわしく説明してください。

Few candidates chose this question, and there was a tendency for candidates to write about war in general rather than to address the specific question about whether war is necessary in the 21st century. Candidates must read the details of the question very carefully and make sure they fully address the question set in the paper.

Question 5 公害

「日本人の『新しい物好き文化』を変えなければ、ごみはへらない。」
あなたはこの意見をどう思いますか。理由をあげてくわしく説明してください。

This was another popular question, but again there was a tendency to write on the general topic area of pollution and environmental protection rather than on the specific issue of the link between rubbish and the Japanese culture of liking new things. Arguments offered by those candidates who tackled this question well included: when new things are bought old things are often thrown out resulting in an increase of rubbish; new things often come beautifully wrapped and this packaging immediately becomes rubbish.