

# CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Paper 0523/01  
Reading and Writing

## Key messages

- In the reading section, candidates are required to understand and respond to information presented in a variety of forms. Candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passages but also to be able to distinguish between facts, ideas and opinions. They should demonstrate the ability to extract relevant specific information from various text types and organise and present it in a logical manner.
- In the writing section, candidates need to show that they can communicate clearly and appropriately in written Chinese to convey information and express opinions. Candidates are expected to use a range of vocabulary and show control of a variety of grammatical structures. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by candidates should be accurate.
- Candidates should choose either the traditional or simplified character version of the paper and write all their answers within that section of the question paper booklet. Candidates must not answer in both versions. If a candidate starts to answer in one part of the booklet by mistake and then moves to a different character version, he/she must cross out any work that he/she does not wish the examiner to consider.
- Candidates should try to be precise when answering questions. Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response.

## General comments

Performance on this component was good. The majority of candidates were able to understand the three reading passages in detail. In the writing section, most candidates showed that they were capable of communicating competently in the target language. Many responses successfully and clearly communicated interesting ideas, but care should be taken to ensure precision in using simple grammatical structures. Some candidates also need to take care when writing characters to ensure clarity and accuracy.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Exercise 1 Questions 1–7**

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a blank form, and need to complete it according to their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is needed to score well.

**Question 1** required candidates to identify the school in which the protagonist studied. This needed to be the name of the college, (英国) 诺森比亚大学, but not a university in the UK, 英国大学.

**Question 2, 3 and 4** were answered correctly by most candidates. It was good to see many candidates scored very well in these three questions.

For **Question 5**, candidates needed to give a precise response, 在广告公司打工 rather than just 在广告公司 to be credited.

**Question 6** proved to be the most challenging in this exercise. Candidates needed to provide sufficient information, such as the important keywords, ‘教授们’ and ‘正面’ in order to convey the meaning without ambiguity.

A high percentage of candidates were able to use the information from the passage to answer **Question 7** with ease.

Generally, candidates did not face much difficulty in locating the correct information for the questions in **Exercise 1**. Most candidates also showed care and precision in completing the form, for example not to put he, 他 or the name of the protagonist, in the answer. This is because all the questions in this exercise required the candidate to put himself or herself in the position of the protagonist to fill out the survey.

### Exercise 2 Questions 8–15

Questions in **Exercise 2** require precise and accurate short answers. Where questions testing implicit meaning, candidates are required to answer in their own words.

**Questions 8** and **9** were both answered well by many. Two elements were required in **Question 10**. One of the elements was tackled well by most candidates, but the other answer was found to be challenging and only the minority of candidates identified the correct response. Candidates who answered incorrectly frequently gave 累积知识和资本 from the next paragraph rather than 赚生活费, which is the immediate benefit of him doing part-time jobs.

**Question 11** also required two elements, 工资不是很多 and 大学这几年白念了. Most candidates answered well. For the second point, a few candidates answered 没有了毕业证, which was not accepted.

**Question 12** required candidates to pay close attention to both the passage and the question. Many candidates misunderstood the question and answered 李小刚打算回乡创业. However, more able candidates were able to show that they had understood the messages given in the passage and could then digest the information to produce answers using their own words, such as 阻止李小刚创业, 不让李小刚放弃经理的职位 or 希望李小刚继续做经理 to be credited.

**Question 13** proved to be the most challenging in **Exercise 2**, as it required candidates to read the question carefully and answer the ultimate goal of agricultural industrialisation in Li's hometown. Many candidates wrote 把家乡变成现代化田园城市 or 让村民变成产业工人 instead of 让村民变成产业工人.

Two elements were required in **Question 14**. Most candidates performed very well in this question and showed that they had understood the reading passage well.

**Question 15** was also handled well by most candidates.

In short, candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions and passage carefully in **Exercise 2**. Furthermore, candidates should be reminded to give a precise response but not to lift whole sentences from the passage.

### Exercise 3 Question 16–20

In **Exercise 3**, the multiple matching exercise, it is recommended that candidates practise skimming and scanning reading techniques and carefully consider each question, taking into account any distracting information in the texts. When writing their answer, candidates should clearly indicate the letter they have selected.

Most candidates demonstrated a good level of understanding of the task and there were some very successful attempts at the exercise. Overall, the whole range of marks was awarded, with most candidates achieving more than five marks. The greatest number of correct answers was to **Question 19**, and the most commonly found wrong answers were **Question 23** and **Question 25**. Presentation of answers was generally clear. When writing their answers, candidates are reminded that if they change their mind, they should not write the second answer over the first, but should cross out the wrong answer clearly, and write their final choice alongside.

#### Exercise 4 Question 26

For **Question 26**, candidates were required to write an email to a friend talking about the new smart phone they recently bought. Candidates were asked to include the reason why he/she bought a new phone, how they saved enough money, as well as their parents' views on this purchase.

Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters, and successfully addressed the tasks given in the bullet points within the character limit.

Many candidates addressed all three bullet points well in their email. Some needed to express their parents' views more clearly to access higher content marks. 我的父母没有看法 is not sufficient in this case. A brief justification is required to show candidates' understanding of the question.

In terms of language use, many candidates demonstrated that they could use simple grammatical structures effectively and precisely. In order to reach the highest mark band, candidates also needed to show that they can use more complex structures and sophisticated language accurately. Candidates are reminded not to use pinyin in their writing exercise.

#### Exercise 5 Question 27

**Question 27** was found to be the most challenging part of the exam for many candidates. It was a task that invited candidates to present arguments for and against a topic, concluding with their own point of view.

This year, candidates were asked to write an article to their school magazine to express their opinions on whether school should use foreign languages to teach science courses.

Two written comments were provided as a stimulus to provoke candidates into thinking about the topic. Candidates were not obliged to include these and could use their own ideas and opinions. These were given as suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, and it was expected that candidates would not simply re-state the ideas provided, but present their own ideas and opinions as well.

Most candidates could clearly state their opinions. The key to success in this section is to make sure ideas are fully developed, using connective words where appropriate. Candidates needed to generate persuasive arguments and to engage the reader's interest to be awarded the highest marks. The highest scoring essays contained interesting and sustained personal opinions in respect of the given issue with well-developed ideas.

In conclusion, centres should continue to support candidates in writing Chinese characters accurately. Candidates should be reminded that the use of idioms and sayings only enhance the quality of the language when used appropriately.

# CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Paper 0523/02  
Listening

## Key messages

- Candidates are expected to identify the key information from a range of spoken material, including announcements, reports and conversations and to be able to respond to factual information as well as more abstract ideas.
- In **Exercise 1 to 3** candidates are required to provide short answers to questions in Chinese characters or pinyin. If a candidate has chosen to write their answers in pinyin instead of characters, there is no requirement to use tones on pinyin, and the spelling of the pinyin does not have to conform to the standard spelling rules. However, the answer must communicate the required information and be completely unambiguous within the context.
- Candidates should choose either the traditional or simplified character version of the paper and write all their answers within that section of the question paper booklet. Candidates must not answer in both versions. They can write either in simplified or traditional characters. If a candidate starts to answer in one part of the booklet by mistake and then moves to a different character version, he/she must cross out any work that he/she does not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Candidates should attempt all questions, write clear and legible responses in the spaces provided in the question paper. Candidates should not write over their initial answers. Attempts which cannot be read, may not be credited.

## General comments

The Listening component was introduced to 0523 in 2020, and this was therefore the first time that candidates had taken a Listening test in Chinese at this level.

Overall, candidates demonstrated confidence in their listening skills and performed well in this exam. Most candidates were well prepared for the exam and were aware of the requirements.

There were some excellent performances and many candidates were confident in providing brief written responses in Chinese. Inaccuracies in written Chinese were tolerated as long as the message provided was communicated clearly and that the candidate's rendering of the answer did not give a different Chinese character/pinyin word with another meaning, which might confuse comprehension of the message. It was noticeable that answers in characters contained a range of inaccurate characters and in some cases the wrong choice of characters did not communicate the required elements and could not be credited.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Exercise 1**

#### **Question 1 to 6**

Generally, candidates performed well in this exercise, which required candidates to write short answers in response to six questions. All candidates understood the rubric well. To score well, candidates should try to establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g. how, why, when, and the key words in the question. In most cases, a short, direct response is most successful.

#### **Question 1**

This question was very well attempted. Most candidates heard and wrote down the correct number with ease.

## Question 2

There was a very mixed response here with some candidates giving an unspecified descriptive word such as ‘心情不好’, which could not be credited. The correct answer was ‘失望’ or its synonym. Words like ‘伤心’ or ‘难过’ were incorrect expressions in response to the question.

## Question 3

This was quite well attempted. In some cases, candidates omitted the verb ‘准备’ and as this is a key word in answering the question, no mark could be awarded.

## Question 4

Candidates answered this question fairly well and many candidates correctly provided either ‘清晨的郊区’ or just ‘郊区’. Some inaccuracies in the writing of ‘郊区’ were observed, and sometimes the wrong characters were written such as ‘校区’ or ‘郊区’.

## Question 5

Performance on this question was good and the majority of candidates were able to score the mark.

## Question 6

This question was generally well answered. In some cases candidates wrote ‘创照力’ instead of ‘创造力’ which could not be credited as the word communicated something different to the required answer.

## Exercise 2

### Question 7(a – h)

Candidates generally performed well in this gap-fill exercise. Candidates heard a longer spoken text about take-away businesses taking over the instant noodle industry. Candidates need to listen for the correct detail in the recording to fill in the gap, and are also advised to check their responses carefully to make sure the word used makes sense in the sentence. Candidates should not include words which are already part of the sentence printed on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.

- (a) This question was generally well answered by the majority of candidates. A common mistake was for candidates to miswrite ‘宅’ as ‘它’ which made the meaning ambiguous.
- (b) Most candidates were able to extract the key words. Some candidates omitted the word ‘软件’ or ‘程序’ after ‘手机外卖’.
- (c) This was consistently well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The expected response was ‘下滑’ or its synonym. Those candidates who did not score frequently used a homophone character in their answer which communicated a different meaning and could therefore not be credited.
- (d) There were many acceptable responses which delivered the meaning ‘less than’. Quite a few candidates heard and wrote the phrase ‘只需要’ but needed to also include the key word ‘不到’ in order to gain the mark.
- (e) This was quite well attempted. Several responses were observed which could not be credited as the use of incorrect characters put the meaning in doubt, such as ‘上班组’ or ‘上班人’.
- (f) This was very well answered by most candidates. The majority of candidates were able to provide either ‘营养’ or its pinyin spelled as either ‘yin yang’ or ‘ying yang’. Incorrect characters such as ‘饮洋’ could not be credited.
- (g) Performance was high on this question and most candidates could provide the key word ‘贵’ or a synonym.

- (h) This question was generally well answered. Some candidates added extra detail which strayed from the targeted information. A common incorrect response was ‘外卖包装’.

### Exercise 3

#### Question 8 (a – h)

In this exercise candidates have to correct a detail in a sentence that contains some wrong information. Candidates heard a longer spoken text about the development of extremely thin glass in China. Candidates are advised to read each given sentence thoroughly before listening to the recording. Candidates also need to be careful not to rewrite the incorrect words already given in the sentence.

- (a) This question was extremely well answered by the majority of candidates. Most candidates correctly wrote the key word ‘纸’ or its pinyin. Miswritten characters that were still recognisable were awarded.
- (b) This was fairly well answered and stronger candidates were able to provide the word ‘结实’ to describe the feature of thin glass. Responses such as ‘强大’, ‘耐撞’ or incorrect characters like ‘结石’ which altered the overall meaning could not be credited.
- (c) This question was consistently well answered by the majority of candidates. In some cases, candidates missed out the key word ‘电子’ which was needed for the mark to be awarded.
- (d) Performance on this question was high and most candidates correctly answered with ‘英国’. Common incorrect responses were ‘欧美’ and ‘美国’.
- (e) Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of this question and were able to identify the key word ‘坚持’. A number of candidates attempted to write the Chinese idiom ‘坚持不懈’; the mark was awarded as long as the key word ‘坚持’ was correct. The character ‘懈’ was frequently miswritten but this did not stop the answer being credited.
- (f) This was very well answered and most candidates were able to correct the sentence correctly by writing either ‘百分之四十’ or ‘40 per cent’. Most candidates wrote the answer in the form of characters on this question.
- (g) There was a mixed level of success here – responses were fairly evenly divided between the expected response, ‘价格/成本’ and the distracting detail ‘技术’. Frequent incorrect responses were ‘价值’ and ‘创造’.
- (h) This question was extremely well attempted by the vast majority of candidates with most providing key word ‘创造’ or its pinyin.

### Exercise 4

#### Question 9 (a – h)

Candidates answer multiple-choice questions in this exercise. Candidates listened to an interview about Chen Xiu and her sports career. Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the text and obtained high marks. Candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which option they wish to be taken as their final choice of answer. It is also important to emphasise that if two boxes are ticked then, even if one of the responses given is correct, it will not be credited.

# CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Paper 0523/03  
Speaking

## **Key messages**

- Examiners must ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test, and should read the instructions given in the syllabus booklet well in advance of the speaking test period.
- The two-to-three minute Topic Presentation should be related to Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country or community.
- In the Topic Conversation, questions should not require candidates to repeat what he/she has already said in the Presentation. In order to reach the higher marks for vocabulary and structures, new evidence needs to be heard that candidates can use a wider range of vocabulary and structures.
- Good questioning in both Topic Conversation and General Conversation should offer candidates the scope and the depth to use a wider vocabulary and structures, opinions and justifications for higher marks.
- Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to show the level and depth of their command of the language.
- At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A-B and one from Areas C-D as set in the syllabus.
- Tests must adhere to the timings as set out in the syllabus.
- Tests must be conducted in Mandarin.

## **General comments**

The majority of centres carried out the tests well. Most were aware that the timing of the presentation is now up to three minutes and so candidates have more time to present what they have found on the topic of their choice. The best performances in the conversation sections were where examiners listened carefully and asked a series of excellent searching questions, which provided candidates with opportunities to express personal ideas and justifications.

It is important that candidates choose the topic for the presentation in advance. Presentations which were on topics that were on a subject of particular interest to the candidate were often lively and interesting. The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in centres where candidates were given opportunities to talk about their own interests and to defend their own opinions. In such centres, candidates had prepared their presentations well and the examiner had pitched questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. Candidates gained marks for responding spontaneously to questions and contributing to the conversation by providing ideas and opinions in both conversation sections on a range of different topics. The strongest candidates showed precise use of a good range of vocabulary and a variety of structures.

### ***Conduct of the test***

From the evidence heard in the recorded samples, the vast majority of examiners were familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language Speaking test and understood the importance of their role. A well-prepared examiner ensures that his/her candidates are put at ease and given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In a very few cases, the Topic Presentation didn't

seem to have been prepared in advance, the timing of sections was sometimes too short and/or the questions were too shallow or 'closed' which severely affected candidate performance. Examiners need to be careful not to ask questions which will make candidates merely repeat material from their presentation.

Questions should be clear to facilitate natural and spontaneous conversation. In a small number of cases examiners had a tendency to give extended responses themselves, and the question was then lost or not clear enough to the candidate.

### **Recorded sample: quality and composition**

In a number of cases, candidates and/or the examiner were not always clearly heard. Background noise makes the moderation process difficult, and in some cases there was evidence that it had affected candidates' performance at the time of exam. If an external microphone is used for recording, please make sure that it is nearer to the candidate. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings before sending to Cambridge.

### **Internal moderation**

Where centres use more than one examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking test, the coordinating examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the examiners in the centre. If a particular examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the centre, all the marks for candidates examined by that examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge. Details of the centre's Internal Moderation procedures must also be enclosed in the paperwork sent to Cambridge. Guidelines for the Internal Moderation of Speaking tests are available from Cambridge.

When a total mark has been changed as the result of internal moderation, the breakdown of marks should also be updated accordingly to avoid the confusion with a clerical error.

### **Application of the mark scheme**

The mark scheme was generally well understood and applied correctly. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often where material from the presentation was repeated and so candidates had not presented new evidence of language / structures. Other examples were where the timing of sections was too short and candidates had not been given enough time to show evidence of language to place them in a higher marking band.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### ***Topic Presentation***

The majority of candidates showed evidence of thorough preparation for their Topic Presentation and performed well, combining factual points with thoughtful personal reflection and critical comments. Aspects of Chinese culture were well-covered in the presentations heard, and there were many examples of presentations covering 中国武术, 孝道, 中国茶, 文房四宝, 中国传统游戏, 十二生肖铜兽, etc. In addition to those more traditional topic areas, it was interesting to hear presentations on trending phenomenon in modern Chinese society, such as 微信, 双十一, 手机支付 and of course 新冠疫情. Some candidates focused on life in their local community and chose to talk about 家乡的传统习俗文化, 马来西亚的华语教学, 马来美食, etc.

Centres are reminded that when a more general topic has been chosen by a candidate, for example, 网络的利弊, or 健康饮食, this has to be linked to an aspect of Chinese culture or life in a Chinese-speaking country or community. Candidates are also advised to avoid copying large amounts of material from different written sources and using these in their presentations unchanged; the presentation should be the candidate's own work, and language drawn from other sources often leads to stilted or less coherent presentations.



### ***Topic Conversation***

Many candidates showed thorough subject knowledge and were able to answer questions asked by the examiner fully. Whilst it is expected that candidates would have thought about and prepared possible follow-up questions around their chosen topic, they should not be delivering another long monologue in this section from memorised material. It is important that examiners include questions that are more unpredictable, and enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously.

In most cases, examiners showed evidence of careful listening to what the candidate had said and raised open questions that were closely linked to the topic and the materials presented. This gave candidates the scope and the depth to provide opinions as well as to provide further information.

### ***General Conversation***

At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A and B, the other from Areas C-D. Topics chosen for the General Conversation should not overlap with the content of Part Two, Topic Conversation in this Speaking test. A full list of the topics can be found in the 2020 – 2022 Syllabus.

A variety of topics was heard in the General Conversations. Many Examiners were fully aware that the level of language and depth to which general topics should be discussed in this examination should be beyond that expected of a Foreign Language examination. In a few cases, questions were not challenging enough to allow candidates to express themselves fully. Centres are reminded that the treatment of topics such as 'Sports and exercise' should be more mature and in-depth at this level, including questions dealing with subjects such as whether taking part in sport conflicts with study time and whether this is problematic, etc., rather than more basic questions such as where they play, with whom, how long for, etc. The best examining was when candidates were invited to express their opinions on a topic, or when Examiners raised a particular issue which gave candidates the opportunity to discuss both sides of the argument.

