

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in Chinese (4CN0/03)
Pearson Edexcel Certificate
in Chinese (KCN0/03)

Paper 3: Speaking

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International GCSE/ Edexcel Certificate Chinese
Paper 3 Speaking
Examiners' Report

General Comments

The International GCSE Chinese speaking examination is a compulsory part of this specification. It includes two sections and is 10 minutes in duration: Section A (4 minutes) and Section B (6 minutes).

Most centres prepared well this year and the majority of candidates demonstrated high quality in their performances with many achieving the higher scores. However a number of centres did not fully commit to the exam procedures and requirements, which therefore affected their candidates' performances.

The following summary can be an idea for all of us to share for the coming examination:

Speaking examination requirements:

This speaking examination covers 5 topic areas and all sub-topic areas can be found on page 11 of Chinese IGCSE Specification (Issue 3).

Topic A: Home and Abroad;

Topic B: Education and Employment

Topic C: House, home and daily routines

Topic D: The modern world and the environment;

Topic E: Social activities, fitness and health.

Candidates need to choose their exam topics from any three of those five topic areas, and all three speaking topics must not be the same. Failure to comply with this rule can lead to no credit awarded to the clashing areas. Centres must pay attention to this point.

Section A: there are two parts in this section, 4 minutes in total:

Presentation: Picture based presentation (monologue) for 1 minute. Each candidate needs to choose their own visual stimulus for this part and describe details of the chosen stimulus for 1 minute. Please be aware that all pictures (including old exam materials) displayed in the Chinese IGCSE Samples Assessment Material must not be used for this speaking exam. Centres, candidates and interviewers should be restricted from using them. Candidates' assessed results can be affected if this is the case. The used visual stimulus must be attached with the candidate coversheet together for the external assessment.

In this part, if candidates' presentation time is over 1 minute, the additional speaking time does not help candidates towards receiving a high score. However, when candidates' speaking time is less than 1 minute, it can lead to a deduction of marks for candidates. Centres must take the above points into account.

Conversation: An interactive conversation based on the chosen stimulus is followed the presentation for 3 minutes. Interviewers must ask meaningful and structured questions related to the chose visual stimulus, which should include direct and indirect questions to the chose stimulus first, and then extended questions within the topic area. All three types of questions can encourage candidates to demonstrate his/her own speaking and understanding skills of the language proficiency. Close-ended questions are not helpful for candidates.

Time management is another considerable factor. Excess speaking time cannot benefit candidate scores, but less speaking time can certainly affect the assessing result. Interviewers should consider the conversation time of 3 minutes.

Section B: there are two conversations in this section, 6 minutes in total:

Conversation 1: a different topic area from Section A - interactive conversation's time is 3 minutes.

Conversation 2: another different topic area from Section A and Section B (conversation 1) - interactive conversation's time is 3 minutes.

In this section, interviewers should ensure that the speaking time for each conversation is equivalent to 3 minutes; and interviewers should also ensure all questions asked should be clear, understandable and well structured. Failure to do so can downgrade candidates' performance.

Time management again is crucial, because over speaking time cannot help improving candidates' scores, but less speaking time can certainly have a negative impact on the assessing result. Consequently, interviewers are the main controller for this section.

Because candidates do not have preparing time prior this speaking exam, proper practice are very important for candidates before the actual speaking examination. Centres should ensure their candidates have received adequate training and practice from their schools prior to this speaking examination.

Assessment: Section A (Presentation and conversation)

Presentation, conversation and fluency (10 marks)

The majority of candidates prepared and performed well to a high standard in their presentation this year. They also demonstrated their confidence and fluency in their conversation which have guaranteed them receiving a high score.

However, a number of issues of this year's speaking exam therefore requires centres, interviewers, and future candidates to consider these in their future exams:

1. Some candidates were not credited in the part of their presentation because they gave no description or inadequate details to the chosen visual picture; for example, if the chosen picture was a street view of a part of the city where he came from, the candidate did not talk about details of the picture itself, instead, talked about his feelings and the concept of family.

2. Some candidates' marks were let down due to the fact that interviewers simply neglected to ask direct questions to the chosen stimulus.

Centres and their appointed interviewers should follow the instructions set in p39 of International GCSE Chinese Specification (Issue 3) and the main requirements for the conversation of Section A mentioned above, in order to support their candidates in the future exams.

3. Some irrelevant or inappropriate questions were asked by interviewers again this year, which had let down the exam performance of their candidates. For instance, the chosen stimulus was the mother and the candidate travelling somewhere, but one question the interviewer asked in their conversation of Section A was: "What is your opinion towards the relationship between girlfriend and boyfriend?" This question was irrelevant to the chosen picture and was also far beyond the level required. All inappropriate questions from interviewers could have led to lower marks.

4. A number of centres did not enclose the chosen stimuli with the signed coversheet to their allocated examiners, which had caused enormous inconvenience and time wastage for the examiners to chase the missing stimuli. Please note that no chosen stimuli enclosed by centres could lead to no credit being granted to the part of presentation to the candidates. It is the centres' responsibility to ensure all stimuli and signed cover sheets are enclosed for their allocated examiners.

5. Time management is very important for this speaking exam. Having mentioned the time required for each section above, it is down to the interviewer to control and manage the time of each section. Some centres or interviewers who failed to control the time of each section - often it was too short; for example, when a presentation's time was less than 1 minute, or a conversation's time was less than 3 minutes, resulting in a deduction of marks to their candidates.

6. There were other issues that occurred in this series which centres and interviewers need to take into consideration in their preparation prior to conducting the speaking exam for candidates.

Some interviewers may speak only single dialect but assume candidates can speak and understand the same dialect; this has neglected the rights of their candidates and also has affected the exam quality of their candidates. For example, one interviewer could only speak Mandarin, but candidates were Cantonese speakers, they were not able to fully understand and fluently respond in Mandarin to all questions asked in Mandarin, as a result, their marks had been downgraded. In another case, one candidate had his presentation done in Cantonese; but, in his three conversations, he

provided all his answers in Cantonese to all questions asked in Mandarin by the interviewer.

Other interviewers have used English terms or words within their questions, this is unacceptable for this speaking examination.

Some interviewers did not pay attention to the contents provided by their candidates, but repeated the same details on the chosen stimulus in their questions; candidates did not have any choice but had to reiterate the same content again.

Knowledge and application of language (5 marks)

Candidates should have received a high mark if they could demonstrate good language ability, such as by using a wide range vocabulary, complex sentence structures.

Accuracy (5 marks)

Candidates should have also been awarded a high mark if they could show strong evidence of word order and correct intonation and pronunciation consistently.

Assessment: Section B (conversation 1 and conversation 2)

In this section, two conversations should be in different topic areas and they are assessed globally.

Communication, interaction and fluency (10 marks)

Candidates did better in Section B than in Section A overall this year.

Candidates were granted high marks if they could communicate smoothly with their interviewers, showing no difficulties in response to a wide range of questions as well as confidently express personal opinions to them.

Interviewers should follow the exam Instructions for the conduct of examinations on p39 of the specification (Issue 3).

However, some typical issues had let down some candidates which centres and interviewers must understand clearly for future exams. Some interviewers did not organise their questions systematically and structurally well for the conversations in this section. Their questions were both long and complicated, which not only had confused their candidates, but also took away the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their speaking abilities in answering the questions, resulting in their scores lowered.

In some cases the interviewers' proficiency level (including pronunciation) in Chinese was not adequate causing significant difficulties; they took a long time and only managed to ask a few questions (some with obvious grammatical errors); as a result, candidates found it either difficult to

understand the questions or their chances to perform well in the exam were reduced. Candidates' marks could have been affected. Centres should assess the language ability of their appointed interviewers prior conducting this exam.

A number of centres had recorded these conversations separately which caused huge difficulties to examiners, and this had also breached the rule of this speaking examination. The two conversations in section B must stay together and they need to be marked together. Centres and interviewers are strongly advised that two sections of this examination should be recorded together in order to avoid a concern of malpractice.

Knowledge and application of language (5 marks)

Candidates should have received a high mark if they could demonstrate their language ability, such as by using a wide range vocabulary, complex sentence structures.

Accuracy (5 marks)

Candidates should have also been awarded a high mark if they could show strong evidences of word order, agreement and intonation and pronunciation seldom interfere with comprehensibility.

Administration

Candidate coversheet

Both interviewer and candidate must sign the declaration of authentication on the candidate coversheet. Some centres continued to use old forms without both signatures for this speaking exam. A copy of the said coversheet can be found on p47 of the specification (Issue 3).

Medias

Centres should ensure all speaking scripts are correctly recorded in CDs or USBs before sending out to examiners; please also ensure all CDs are fully protected to avoid any damage caused in the post. All CDs and USBs must be clearly labelled. It is important that centres keep back-up files of the speaking scripts in the events of loss of originals or damages. Please note that we still had received empty CDs or unopened CDs from centres this year. Some recordings were in bad quality which had lowered their candidates' grades as a result.

Please also note that audio cassettes will no longer be accepted for assessment after September 2014.

Centres and Interviewers

All centres need to understand the meaning of Assessment for this speaking examination set on p7 of the specification (Issue 3). Candidates of those

centres which have prepared well for this speaking exam would have shown good performance.

Interviewers play an important part in this exam. All interviewers should study the exam instructions for the conduct of examinations on p39 of the specification (Issue 3) prior to conducting this examination. Clear, structured, appropriate and logical questions are helpful for candidates to achieve their higher potential.

Please note that this speaking examination is assessed externally. Teachers/ Interviewers should not need to mark this paper.

Centres with larger number of candidates should arrange adequate interviewers to conduct this speaking examination, in order to avoid missing part of two sections, cutting conversation times and importantly, fatigue of the interviewers which can cause more issues to this examination.

Conclusion

The International GCSE Chinese speaking examination provides an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their speaking and understanding abilities from a wide range of choices. In order for centres to assist their candidates in achieving their highest quality of performance, centres should offer adequate and proper practical exercises for them prior to their speaking examination. They should also ensure that interviewers, in particular external interviewers, should fully understand and comply with the requirements and procedures set for this speaking examination.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>