

# CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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. The 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 Chinese. 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 based on their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is required to score well.

**Question 1** proved challenging for many candidates. They may not have understood the keywords in the passage. Many answered 布拉格/天津人/中国人 instead of 捷克(人).

A high percentage of candidates were able to use the information from the passage to answer **Question 2** and **Question 3** with ease.

**Question 4** was answered well, with most candidates picking the correct option 普通.

**Question 5** was also handled well by most candidates. However, a small number of candidates answered 普通 instead of providing the type of visa required.

**Question 6** proved challenging for many candidates. They might have misunderstood the requirements of the question. Some candidates wrote 受邀参与央视节目的录制, which was not precise enough to earn the mark. Others wrote 中国队, which was not the organisation that sent out the invitation this time.

Candidates' answers for **Question 7** were mixed. Some candidates scored one mark by identifying the answer 去西安游览. However, some did not include the location 央视/北京, which was needed for the second mark to be awarded.

Overall, it was encouraging to see that many candidates scored well in **Exercise 1**. Most candidates also showed care and precision in completing the form. Candidates are reminded to practice reading different types of forms so that they become familiar with the layout and key terms.

## Exercise 2

### Questions 8 – 17

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

**Question 8** was answered well by many candidates. However, a small number of candidates missed the key word 站 in their answers, so no marks were awarded.

**Question 9** required candidates to use their own words to describe Dunn's feelings when he first observed Earth from space. Many candidates demonstrated that they understood the passage and could process the information to produce answers such as 惊讶, 吃惊, or 不可思议. However, some candidates lifted the quotation said by Dunn, which was not awarded any marks.

Most candidates answered **Question 10** correctly. However, some candidates wrote 冰块要先被气化成水蒸气再冷冻收集成液态水, which includes both steps of obtaining water on Mars, so the mark was not awarded.

**Question 11** asked candidates to identify the most feasible method for obtaining building material for a base on Mars. More capable candidates provided precise answers, but many wrote 把火星的泥土制成混凝土, 配以立体打印机建成基地, which could not be awarded the mark.

**Question 12** required two elements to be addressed, one of which was tackled well by most candidates. However, some candidates did not gain full marks by answering 必须进行大量的操练来维持肌肉的强度 or 需要和不同的人交流并建立关系, which are not among the two characteristics needed for living on Mars.

**Question 13** required candidates to pay close attention to both the passage and the question. The majority of candidates answered 垂直农场 accurately, but many did not earn the second mark because their answers 微生物/微生物发酵 were incomplete without 生产的蛋白质.

**Question 14** and **Question 15** were answered well by the majority of the candidates.

**Question 16** proved to be the most challenging question in this exercise. Candidates were required to use their own words to describe Gerry's attitude towards humanity's future on earth. Lifting 格里认为在未来数千年中人鳄梨免遭重大灾难的可能性很小 is not sufficient to score the mark. More capable candidates could interpret its implicit meaning with answers such as 没有太多希望/悲观/消极/现实.

Most candidates answered **Question 17** correctly.

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

### Questions 18 – 27

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

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the task, and there were some very successful attempts at the exercise. Overall, the full range of marks was awarded, with most candidates achieving more than five marks. The highest number of correct answers was for **Question 27**, while the most common incorrect answers were for **Questions 22** and **23**.

The presentation of answers was generally clear. Candidates are reminded that if they change their mind when writing their answers, they should not write the second answer over the first. Instead, they should clearly cross out the incorrect answer and write their final choice alongside it.

#### Exercise 4

##### Question 28

Candidates were required to write an email to a friend discussing their recent experience at a design exhibition. They were asked to include an introduction to the institution that organised the event, the reason they attended the exhibition, and a description of the design that impressed them the most.

Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters and successfully addressed the task outlined in the bullet points within the character limit. Many candidates addressed all three bullet points well in their email. However, some missed a mark by including the theme of the exhibition rather than introducing the institution.

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

#### Exercise 5

##### Question 29

**Question 29** 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 a blog expressing their opinions on whether they should go gift shopping at a chain store or an independent shop.

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

Most candidates clearly stated their opinions with support them with ideas. The key to success in this section is to ensure that ideas are fully developed, using connective words where appropriate. Candidates needed to generate persuasive arguments and engage the reader's interest to be awarded the highest marks. The highest-scoring essays contained interesting personal opinions on 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 enhances the quality of the language only when used appropriately.

# CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/02

Listening

## Key messages

- Candidates are expected to identify the key information through a range of spoken material, including talks and conversations and to be able to respond to factual information as well as abstract ideas.
- In **Exercises 1–3** candidates are required to provide short answers to questions in Chinese characters or pinyin. They can write either in simplified or traditional characters. If a candidate has chosen to write their answers in pinyin instead of characters, there is no requirement to use tones on the pinyin, and the spelling of the pinyin does not have to conform to the standard spelling rules. However, the answer must be completely unambiguous within the context.
- Candidates should choose either the traditional or simplified character version of the paper. They must write all their answers within their chosen 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, they must cross out any work that they do 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 that cannot be read, may not be credited.

## General comments

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 many excellent performances, and most candidates were able to provide brief written responses in Chinese (either in characters or pinyin). Many candidates could identify the relevant keywords from the texts and it was evident that some had taken notes while listening to the recordings to help them. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully during the reading time and to keep the responses short, clear, and to the point to avoid any incorrect material that may lead to invalidating an otherwise correct response.

It was noticeable this year that accuracy in characters had noticeably improved from previous years. There were still some cases where candidates had written the wrong characters and if this did not communicate the required elements it could not be credited. Inaccuracies of Chinese are tolerated in this exam as long as the message provided is communicated clearly. The key point is that if inaccuracies in either the candidate's character writing or spelling of a pinyin word changes the meaning, and therefore makes their answer ambiguous, marks cannot be awarded.

## Comments on specific questions

### Exercise 1

#### Questions 1– 6

Generally, candidates performed well in this exercise, which required them to write short answers in response to six questions. All candidates understood the rubric well. Candidates who performed well in this

section had a thorough understanding of the question words, e.g. how, why, when, and the keywords in the question. In most cases, a short, direct response is the most successful.

### Question 1

This question was quite well attempted. Most candidates understood the whole conversation and wrote down the correct answer 七点 in characters with ease. Another time phrase, 四点半, was mentioned in the conversation but was incorrect, which distracted some candidates.

### Question 2

The majority of candidates answered this question quite well. The expected response was 第一个星期 or 第一周. The word 学期 is not required in the answer, as it is already included in the question. The incorrect character 弟 instead of 第 was not credited.

### Question 3

This question was generally well-answered. Pinyin for 线 is accepted, but not the character 现 as the word 现上 does not convey the meaning of 'online'.

### Question 4

This question tests attitude, which many candidates found particularly difficult. Some candidates answered with 'boring, dislike' rather than 'not interested,' which was not credited. Any attempt with both a correct and an incorrect answer is considered invalid. Candidates are recommended to provide only one answer that they feel most confident about.

### Question 5

Most candidates were able to respond to this question well. To gain 1 mark, both keywords 红色 and 大楼 must be included. Incorrect characters, such as 姿 or 数, were not credited.

### Question 6

This question required two elements: the flight ticket and the price increase. Most candidates did well on this question. The most popular incorrect answer was '容易晕车'. Some candidates could not write the characters '疯涨', instead writing '风' and '长', which were ambiguous regarding the meaning of 'increase'. Therefore, no mark was awarded.

### Exercise 2

#### Question 7(a)–(h)

Candidates generally performed well in this gap-fill exercise where they heard a longer spoken extract about the 'Litter Rider Cycling Club'. Candidates are advised to read each question carefully before listening to the recording. Candidates should not only listen for the correct targeted detail in the recording but also check their responses carefully to make sure the words used make sense in the sentence. Candidates should not include the words which are already part of the sentence printed on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.

- (a) Overall, this question was very well attempted. Many candidates gained 1 mark by writing the word 爱好 accurately. Occasionally the wrong character 号 was written instead of 好 and this was not accepted.
- (b) Many candidates were able to provide 观众 in the answer to this question. Some attempts, such as 陪伴, 陪着 or 快乐 were considered as wrong answers because the sentence is grammatically incorrect with the choice of these words.
- (c) This was consistently well answered by the vast majority of candidates. The expected response was 闪电. The incorrect pinyin 'shang dian' is not accepted as it conveys a different meaning.

(d) There were a few bike knowledge-related words mentioned, such as 课程, 刹车 and 骑行. Many candidates were able to catch the key information correctly but wrote character '结构' as '解构' or '节构', or Pinyin with the wrong tone 'j i ě g ò u' which was not credited.

(e) Candidates should listen carefully to the context before attempting their answers. The key information is 安全. The words 掌握 and 知识 were mentioned but not essential.

(f) The performance on this question was good. The majority of the candidates understood and were able to write the word 包容 with ease. The incorrect character 抱 was not credited.

(g) The keyword for this question is 'telephone'. Many candidates included the word 'consultation' in their answer, which was not necessary. This is because the question asked about the means of getting the information, for which 电话 is the key answer. Any additional information, either in characters or pinyin, containing ambiguity was not credited.

(h) This question required candidates to listen to the context carefully and to be able to select the specific information as the key answer. The keyword is 'mountain bike', not 'bike' in general. Some candidates added the additional information 'adult's' before the key answer, which was not credited as the question was about the type of the bike for children.

### Exercise 3

#### Question 8(a)–(h)

In this exercise, candidates have to correct a detail in a sentence that contains a piece of incorrect information. Candidates heard a longer spoken text about the dance studio in the city. Candidates are advised to read each given sentence thoroughly before listening to the recording. It is also helpful for candidates to identify the type of word needed to correct the sentence, e.g. a noun/verb/adjective. Candidates also need to be careful not to rewrite the incorrect words already given in the sentence.

(a) This question was well answered. Most candidates understood the context and were able to write the combination of the phrase 'rest/break + area' to complete the sentence. The key information 'area' indicates that it is an open space; therefore, attempts such as 教室, 休息室 or 购物中心六楼 were not credited.

(b) Many candidates were able to provide the answer 学员. However, some candidates wrote 节奏 to complete the sentence, which does not match with the context.

(c) This question tested candidates' understanding of attitude vocabulary and their ability to distinguish between 沮丧 and 伤心. The correct answer is 沮丧, though 失落 was accepted as an alternative.

(d) This question required candidates to pay attention to details in the context. The expected response 工作 was not mentioned directly in the text but required candidates to summarise from '又当店长又当教练' into 工作. Some incorrect attempts were 事情, 职位 or 职业.

(e) This question was well-answered. Many candidates were able to write the key answer 支持 accurately in characters. Some candidates wrote 技 instead of 支 as a typo, but this impeded the communication and could not gain a mark.

(f) Many candidates heard the key information 比赛 and answered confidently using characters or pinyin. Some candidates used a combination of character and pinyin, which was accepted as long as the pinyin for 赛 was correct.

(g) There was a high level of success here – the expected response, 体育, was mentioned in the recording. Any additional information was accepted as long as it was unambiguous in the meaning of 'sports'.

(h) This question was less well-attempted than others in this exercise. Candidates needed to understand the overall purpose of hip-pop dance, which is to 'release the pressure'. The correct answer is a verb phrase not a noun word, so '灵丹妙药' was not credited.

**Exercise 4**

**Question 9(a)–(h)**

Candidates answer multiple-choice questions in this exercise. Candidates listened to an extract about an interview with Huang Qiang, a chef as well as a gourmet vlogger. Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the content and a number of them obtained full marks. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions and the options carefully during the reading time. They are advised to make it absolutely clear which option they wish to be taken as their final choice as the 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

Paper 0523/03  
Speaking

## **Key messages**

- It is important to adhere the stipulated timings for each part of the Speaking examination so as to be fair to all candidates. The timings should be Presentation, 2–3 minutes, Topic Conversation, 4–5 minutes and General Conversation, 4–5 minutes.
- The Presentation should be related to Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country or community. A list of example topics can be found in later pages in this report.
- Part 2, Topic Conversation and Part 3, General Conversation should be conducted as interactive conversations, not another presentation or monologues from candidates with fewer questions from the teacher/examiner. Simply delivering monologues will not provide opportunities to show comprehension and responsiveness skills and so will disadvantage candidates.
- Examiners should ensure that questions in both the Topic Conversation and General Conversation offer candidates plenty of opportunities to express opinions and justifications so as to reach the higher levels in the Mark Scheme.
- To achieve well in the Conversation sessions, candidates need to demonstrate they can handle unexpected questions with natural and spontaneous responses.
- 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.

## **General comments**

This year we have heard a full range of candidates' performances once more. There were many examples of interesting presentations where candidates showed evidence of thorough research and planning. Most teacher/examiners were very confident in conducting the exam, listened carefully to each candidate, asking a series of excellent searching questions pitched at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. In the General Conversation, centres usually covered a good balance of topic areas from the syllabus, ensuring a varied range of subjects were discussed.

The best performances were where candidates were given opportunities to provide extended responses where they could exhibit their command of the language, or when they were engaged in meaningful discussions, expressing and defending their own opinions. Candidates gained marks for responding spontaneously to questions and contributing to the conversation by conveying their ideas with clarity and precision. The strongest candidates also showed consistent and precise use of a wide range of vocabulary and a variety of structures to articulate their perspectives effectively.

## **Conduct of the test**

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. The introduction of each part and flow from one to next of the test were clear and candidates were given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their ability. In a small number of cases, the timing of individual sections did not comply with the guidance given in the syllabus and was sometimes too short or too long. When the questions were too closed or too fact-based, this restricted the answers that candidates could give and therefore affected their performance. In a very small number of cases, questions were too long and not clear, which took a lot of time and made it difficult for candidates to follow up and respond.

## Recorded sample: quality and composition

While most centres had submitted an appropriate sample and correct documents to Submit for Assessment, in a number of cases the quality of the recordings or the Working Mark Sheets were poor which made the moderation process difficult. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings and particularly any scanned documents before uploading to the Submit for Assessment platform.

## Internal moderation

When a total mark has been changed as the result of internal moderation, the breakdown of marks should also be updated accordingly to avoid any confusion with clerical errors. Guidelines for the Internal Moderation of Speaking tests are available on the samples database:

<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples>

## 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 included where responses were more like a monologue or seemed over-prepared and so were missing the element of naturalness and spontaneity.

## Comments on specific questions

### ***Presentation***

Most candidates have taken the opportunity to do extended research and to present a topic of their own interest on an aspect of Chinese culture or life in a Chinese-speaking country or community. It is recommended that candidates state the title of their presentation before they start. The topics heard this year were diverse, indicating candidates' attentiveness towards traditions as well as social and current affairs in their living communities. A variety of topics are listed here as an example.

- Traditional festivals and celebrations, for example, 新年贺词, 十二生肖, 南北狮, 灯谜, 门神, 年夜饭, 清明食物, 不同的中秋, 七夕与情人节, 重阳节, 中西方节日的异同 etc.
- Traditional customs, for example, 中国婚俗, 中西式葬礼对比, 中国的祭祀文化, 二十四节气, 冬至, etc.
- Chinese arts and handicrafts, for example, 丹青, 书法, 文房四宝, 青花瓷, 国画与油画, 中国结, 吹糖人, 皮影, 油纸伞, 剪纸, etc.
- Chinese costumes and clothing, for example, 中国服饰, 唐装与旗袍, 非物质文化遗产-刺绣、苏绣, 汉服新风潮, 颜色的寓意, etc.
- Chinese cuisines and culinary, for example, 中国各地美食, 预制菜, 茶道, 武汉过早, 香港茶餐厅文化, 广式煲汤, 椰浆饭, 自热火锅, 澳门饮食, 珍珠奶茶, 咖啡和茶, 舌尖上的中国, 狗不理包子, 油条, 港式奶茶, 川菜, 东坡肉 螺狮粉, etc.
- Chinese music and instruments, films and performing arts, for example, 中国古筝, 琵琶, 扬琴, 二胡, 京剧, 华语电影的发展, 延禧攻略, 中国动画, 方言歌曲, 中国综艺节目, 中国风歌曲, 七龙珠和西游记的关系, etc.
- Chinese medicine, 中医与西医, 中药, 针灸, etc.
- Traditional games and martial arts, for example, 中国传统游戏和玩具, 中国象棋, 麻将, 扒铃, 功夫, 太极, 打铁花, 中国足球的历史与发展, etc.
- Chinese philosophies and religions, for example, 古代中国的传统哲学之一: 道法自然, 儒家文化对现代友谊的影响, 百善孝为先, 重男轻女, etc.
- Classical classic literature and historical figures or a role model from modern society, for example, 西游记, 水浒, 三国演义, 孙子兵法, 唐诗宋词, 兰亭序, 苏轼, 郭鹤年, 李白, 文天祥, 秦始皇, 赵云, 武则天, 朱棣, 孔子, 孙悟空, 诸葛亮, 韩信, 关羽, 西施; 马化腾, 李宗伟, 姚明对中国男篮的贡献, 华晨宇, 周星驰, 杨紫琼, etc.

- Reflections of life in Chinese speaking regions or societies, for example, education : 马来华人的教育观, 虎妈, 高考, 尊师重道, 中学生是否应该出国留学, 谷歌翻译是否有助于中文学习, 华文的传承, 国际学校和华校, 香港家庭教育方式, 隔代教育, etc.
- Health: 中国青少年近视率, 亚洲青少年的容貌焦虑, 外卖对年轻人的影响, etc.
- Travel and transportation: 中国基建—地铁, 中国火车发展史, 中国的马车, 中国造船史, 高铁, 亲子游, 上海天文馆, 故宫, 北京胡同, etc.
- Technology: 中国网络文化, 微博的挑战与魅力, 青少年网络游戏的问题, 短视频平台, 中国国产游戏, 原神, 微信, 抖音, 小红书, 电动汽车在中国和印尼, etc.
- Society and new trends: 追星, 大熊猫热, 唐人街, 华人移民, 快递, 中国社会老龄化问题, 中国与贸易全球化, etc.

The presentation should be the candidate's own work based on sufficient research on the chosen topic. Candidates are advised to avoid copying large amounts of material from different sources and using these unchanged in the presentation as this will affect organisation of materials and coverage of the topic. Over ambitious language often leads to stilted or less coherent presentations.

### **Topic Conversation**

This part of the Speaking Test should be an interactive conversation based on what candidates have said in their presentation. The timing for this part is 4–5 minutes to allow deeper discussions on the topic and the materials presented. Examiners are reminded that they should not ask questions which require candidates to repeat what they have already said in the Presentation, as this will restrict the range of language that candidates produce and can also cause confusion. The most successful conversations were those where examiners asked open questions that were relevant and logically linked, which gave candidates opportunities to provide further information, experience, opinions and justifications. For example, if the Presentation was about a famous local cuisine, the questions in the Topic Conversation could ask for detailed, further information on anything from the cooking method, ingredients, personal experience/memories and comparisons to other cuisines, to deeper discussions on the meaning behind the local cuisine, links to history and customs, healthy dietary habits, culinary diversity, etc.

Whilst it is expected that candidates would have thought about and prepared possible follow-up questions around their chosen topic, they should **not** know any actual questions in advance. It is important that examiners include unexpected questions and changes in direction of the conversation which enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously, to initiate and maintain conversation to achieve a higher category in the Mark Scheme.

### **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 syllabus.

Most examiners have clearly announced the broad Topic Area before asking the first question, linked questions in logic and provided scopes for candidates to extend their answers. Candidates found it difficult to switch with a series of more superficial questions on many different topics.

The majority of 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 show what they can do. Centres are reminded that the treatment of topics such as 'Sports and exercise' should be more mature and in-depth, for example, 你个人觉得做运动有哪些好处? 有什么坏处? or 有人说做运动会占用学习时间, 你觉得呢? 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.