

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/01
Speaking

Key messages

- Candidates had generally prepared their presentations well.
- Most candidates made a good effort to use a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary.
- Candidates should continue to work on their pronunciation and intonation.
- Candidates should be taught to address the examiner as 'sensei' rather than 'anata'.
- Candidates should be reminded to ask questions as part of the dialogues. Ideally these should arise naturally within the flow of the conversation, rather than be added on as independent questions at the end.

General comments

Most candidates were able to engage appropriately with the examiner in conversation, answering the questions that were put to them using a range of vocabulary and grammar. Many candidates were clearly personally interested in the topics they were talking about, and aimed to interest and engage the examiner. They had a good level of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge in these areas and were able to give facts and also their own opinions. In some cases there was a noticeable loss of detail and fluency when the examiner led the conversation into other topic areas, but most candidates had good strategies for asking for clarification and repetition. Some candidates did not ask the examiner any questions.

Candidates should continue to work on improving their intonation and pronunciation, paying particular attention to long and short vowels, and any errors which arise due to the influence of their first language. On the whole candidates did well with fluency, range of grammar and vocabulary. The vast majority of candidates were able to maintain the conversation for the required 20 minutes, although sometimes there was a tendency to go back over material already presented, particularly between the topic conversation and the general conversation.

Overall, candidates showed evidence they could communicate successfully using spoken Japanese, and that they also enjoyed doing so.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

The vast majority of presentations were comprehensive and prepared well. Candidates sounded comfortable with their material and were fully in control of their presentations. There were some candidates whose topics were not strongly related to Japan or Japanese culture. Some candidates sounded as though they had found information on the internet (which is acceptable) but then failed to transform it into an appropriate spoken form, meaning that there were some grammatically correct but contextually inappropriate sentence endings (e.g. である)

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates were well prepared for this section and were able to engage with the examiner in conversation. Sometimes they were weaker in presenting their own opinions compared to giving facts about a topic. Candidates would benefit from trying to predict possible questions they might be asked, and being prepared to give and justify opinions. A small minority of candidates had little to add beyond what they had said in the presentation and simply repeated material. Candidates are advised to have extra material prepared which they can bring into the topic conversation.

Section 3: General Conversation

Candidates generally engaged well with the examiner and sounded as though they were enjoying the conversation. Candidates are encouraged to take the initiative beyond simply answering the questions. They should give their own opinions, expand on the points they are making, and ask question to the examiner in a natural way. It may be advisable for teachers to revisit some of the easier topics such as family or hobbies that are likely to have been taught at the beginning of the course, as sometimes candidates who were able to speak using quite sophisticated grammar and vocabulary reverted to extremely simple language on these easier topics.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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:** write within 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

There was a mixed performance on this paper with some candidates performing very well but other candidates found the paper challenging.

It is very important for candidates to read the passages thoroughly, to understand what each question is asking for and to respond appropriately. Answers should be concise and candidates should not lift content from the text. Candidates should aim to use their own words.

Many candidates used appropriate kanji for the level and some of them wrote very well. However, there were some who used a lot of hiragana, and candidates should be reminded to use kanji where it is appropriate in their writing. Spelling errors in words written in katakana were quite common.

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.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

The purpose of this exercise was 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. The two parts which candidates found the most challenging were **b** and **d**.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to produce a grammatically correct sentence for each exercise using a good number of kanji and most of them received 3 or 4 marks for this question. However, some candidates used the same verb from the passage in their answers and as a result, no mark was given. It is very important for candidates to read the instructions carefully and make sure not to write the same or a very similar sentence from the passage. All candidates need to focus on writing a sentence using appropriate grammar correctly.

Candidates need to keep their answers short in this question. A mark cannot be given if the structure does not use the required grammar even if the right formation of the verb is used. Candidates should check their answers carefully to avoid careless spelling mistakes, such as hard sounds or kanji with the same reading but different meaning.

Some candidates had clearly prepared well for this exercise and performed very well showing their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Both polite form and plain form writing are accepted in this question.

- (i) e.g. あの映画を見たかどうか聞きます。
In this exercise it was acceptable to write without どうか as long as it made sense.
Many candidates managed to produce a good sentence using the grammar correctly.
- (ii) e.g. 漢字が書けます。
This question was answered well by candidates who understood from reading the passage carefully that the potential form was needed. Other candidates who did not read the passage well did not manage to gain a mark, writing a passive sentence. A few candidates wrote unclear sentences using a verb which could be potential or passive.
- (iii) e.g. 電車に乗るとききっぷを買います。
This question was answered very well by candidates who clearly understood how to produce a sentence using the required grammar and they succeeded in writing interesting sentences using adjectives, nouns, plain past tense. For example, 体の調子が悪いとき, 高校のとき, 転んだとき. W (とき) was accepted in both hiragana or kanji.
- (iv) e.g. ごはんを食べないで寝ました。
Many candidates succeeded in producing a good sentence using this grammar which means 'without doing'. However, it was noticeable that ない form structures were used incorrectly. Common errors included, 先生は「教室の中で食べないでください」と言いました, 父は家事をしないでですから、よくないと思います。
- (v) e.g. 本をもってきます。
This question was challenging for most candidates. One mark was awarded for a grammatically correct answer.

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 for candidates to use the polite form in their answers. However, kanji should be used and written correctly. It is not essential to use any kanji from outside the syllabus.

- (a) Some candidates answered this question well and as a result, many 1 or 2 marks. It was common for candidates to lift their answers to this question directly from the passage; they should be reminded that they should rephrase the language used in the text in their responses. Candidates who did not manage to receive marks wrote answers such as 歩くのを手伝う。
- (b) Most candidates managed to respond to this question well. A few candidates mistakenly included answers which had already been given as part of question (a). 年よりにいい was chosen as a correct answer by many candidates. However, お年よりのよわい筋肉にいい or 歩くことがらくなる were not accepted.
- (c) Many candidates succeeded in responding to this question well. In particular, some candidates were able to rephrase 安くない to 高い accurately and received full marks. A few candidates incorrectly wrote about what Professor Sankai said. They could have avoided this mistake if they had read the passage more carefully.
- (d) Many candidates received 2 marks, rephrasing their answers in their own words successfully. Other answers such as 使いかたが難しい or 歩き続けることができる were also accepted.

- (e) Many candidates received 2 or 3 marks for this question. Weaker candidates referred only Professor Sankai's childhood experience.
- (f) Some candidates incorrectly mentioned what Professor Sankai's plan was in this part. Many candidates wrote 予想して考えることは大切 or 将来の可能性を考える rather than 夢を見る in their answers.

Passage Two

Question 4

Many candidates were able to respond to all of the questions and answered well in their own words. 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.

Stronger candidates rephrased their answers as much as possible rather than lifting from the passage directly and were awarded good marks for Quality of Language. Candidates are strongly recommended to check their answers as frequent careless spelling mistakes were observed.

- (a) Many candidates managed to respond to this first question very well and therefore most of them received two marks. Some candidates lifted their answers directly from the passage and included unnecessary content for this question. Some answers did not make sense, for example 大きい紙を書きます.
- (b) A lot of candidates managed to get 2 or 3 marks for this question as there was more content to respond to. However, other candidates seemed to find it difficult to rephrase their answers and relied heavily on lifting language from the passage.
- (c) Most candidates received at least 1 mark for this question. Some candidates could rephrase 写生 in their own words, such as 絵を書くこと. However, some candidates used a present tense in their answer, which was not appropriate for this question.
- (d) The majority of candidates answered this question well and therefore many candidates received 2 or 3 marks. Some candidates found it difficult to use 話しかける but they managed to rephrase their response, writing for instance 話せた or 話すことができた.
- (e) This question was generally answered well by many candidates and most of them managed to score 2 marks. However, some candidates mentioned points such as collecting money. Candidates need to read the questions carefully and understand what the question means and respond appropriately.
- (f) Many candidates tried to respond to this question and some of them managed to answer very well. Others did not respond appropriately writing 年よりも楽しみをあたえる, which was irrelevant to this question. No marks were awarded if candidates only mentioned 家族が遠くに住んでいる or 家族が忙しい as these were not direct answers.

Question 5

Overall, the vast majority of candidates performed extremely well and managed to get high marks for this question. In part (a) candidates must answer the question asked drawing information from the two passages to produce a focussed summary. Some candidates included content relating to their own ideas or experiences such as 寄付した方が いい or 手紙を書く or いい食事をする which were not found in the passages, and no marks can be awarded for this. Not all candidates managed to include points about supporting elderly people who become disabled. Stronger candidates listed points in short and clear sentences from the passages, although there was a tendency to focus more on passage one than passage two. Some candidates produced very strong essays.

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. Some candidates used up all the character space answering part (a) and did not respond to (b).

Candidates should be reminded to follow the word limit and should learn how to use 原稿用紙. It was unnecessary for candidates to write vertically.

- (a) The majority of candidates extracted the factual points about how people can support elderly and disabled people in society. Candidates generally selected more content from the first passage. Many candidates used their own ideas which were not found in either passage and should be reminded that no credit can be given for this. The task is to summarise the information from the two reading passages, focussing on the specific question asked. A few candidates produced an essay which did not address the question as it had been set.
- (b) Many candidates had some appropriate ideas for a present they could bring, such as the elderly person's favourite food, family photos, or games to make the elderly person happy. Examples included that playing games could make them forget time passing while they are having lots of fun, or they could talk about the person's family while looking through the family photos. Some candidates did not mention a specific souvenir to take with them because they simply did not know what おみやげ means.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high level to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it challenging to structure their ideas grammatically and to communicate in their own words in written Japanese at the level. There were mistakes with particles, and this caused difficulty in understanding what candidates were trying to say, or it changed the meaning of the sentence from what they wanted to say. Candidates should pay attention to the polite form and the plain form as sometime these were mixed in sentences.

Candidates should aim to use kanji from the defined content in order to show their kanji skills rather than just using hiragana. Stronger candidates used a variety of kanji words in their writing beautifully. Generally speaking, candidates succeeded in producing a well-structured essay in this question.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03
Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well, candidates should

- make sure that they address the specific question on the paper and not just the general topic area;
- make sure that they argue a case, clearly stating what their viewpoint is, and organising their material to build the case they are making;
- write in paragraphs, and have an introductory and concluding paragraph;
- be aware that there is a difference between the kanji used in Japan and those used in other countries;
- work on the accuracy of how they transcribe katakana words.

General comments

Most candidates were able to write the correct length using a good range of grammar, vocabulary and kanji. Candidates are recommended to pay particular attention to the accuracy of the grammatical structures they use. A smaller range with higher accuracy is clearer for the reader than many complex grammatical structures attempted with many errors. Candidates are also reminded to use Japanese kanji. Use of simplified characters as used in the People's Republic of China, or use of kanji compounds that exist in Chinese but not in Japanese is confusing to the reader. Similarly, most common katakana words have a standard way of transcription, and candidates should be familiar with these and use them.

Candidates must answer the specific question posed in the examination, and not simply write on the general topic area.

Although there are no marks specifically for how they write on 原稿用紙, candidates should be aware of the conventions of using it. Paragraphs should be indicated with a change of line and a one square indentation.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 世代の違い

「友だちと海外旅行に行きたいのに、大学生になるまでだめだ、と両親はいいます。」 (まゆみ、16才) 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。

Most candidates who chose this question were clear about whether they were for or against a 16 year old travelling abroad independently. They were able to support their viewpoint with reasoned arguments. Sometimes the essays digressed from the specific question to a general discussion on the generation gap between parents and teenage children. These scored less well for content.

Question 2 心と体の健康

「よくスポーツをすると、体も心も健康になるので、高校生の部活は大切だ。」 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 the most popular question. Many candidates had impressive knowledge of the general topic area, and had looked up not only facts and figures, but had memorised some kanji for difficult words such as 糖尿病 or 高血圧. However, there was a tendency to write a general essay on the importance of exercise for health and the specific focus of the question towards 部活 was missed by some candidates. Candidates who

were focused on this aspect of the question raised points such as doing sport regularly and making friends and how these were also good for mental health. The very strongest candidates were also able to make the point that 部活 can take up an excessive amount of time, leading to a deterioration in mental health.

Question 3 教育

「留学すると、考えが広がるので、高校生は全員留学を体験するべきだ。」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。

The vast majority of candidates were able to write about the advantages of going to study abroad. However, many missed the specific point of the question, namely that all high school candidates should go abroad. Candidates should read the question very carefully, and answer the specific question that is asked in the examination paper. Those who did answer the question fully were able to raise points such as the cost and disruption to preparation for university entrance exams as disadvantages of sending all high school candidates abroad to study.

Question 4 技術の進歩

「今の若者は携帯電話にたよりすぎて、物事をしっかりおぼえないので、将来が心配だ。」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 question was only answered by a few candidates, and there was a tendency for candidates to write a general essay on the pros and cons of teenagers using a mobile phone. Many wrote about teenagers being addicted to using their mobile phones, which did not really address the key point of this question.

Question 5 環境保護

「町の開発は大切だが、歴史のある建物をのこすことはもっと大切だ。」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 not answered by many candidates, but those who attempted it did well. Candidates who chose this question showed confidence in the topic and wrote well about it. A variety of relevant examples were given from candidates' own cities.