

2014 Languages: Chinese Second Language GA 3: Examination

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Many students performed well in the 2014 Chinese Second Language written examination. Most students demonstrated good skills in all language areas – listening, reading and translating, as well as essay writing – and achieved good results. A small number of students struggled in all sections, however, in particular listening and reading comprehension.

Most students appeared to be familiar with the format of the examination. Almost all responded in the appropriate language for each section, although quite a few students did not read all the instructions carefully and wrote their responses in the wrong place. In preparation for the exam, students should have practised both reading and responding well to exam questions.

Students should remember that the amount of answer space given and the marks allocated to a particular question are a good indication of the length of response required. Students should also check to see if a question requires them to present their answer in point form or in full sentences. They are required to answer in full sentences in Chinese in Part B of Section 1 – Listening and responding and Section 2 – Reading and responding.

Many students understood the translation tasks well and made good attempts; however, some students seemed to understand the Chinese wording but were unable to translate it into appropriate English. Students should not translate word-for-word from Chinese.

Most students answered all questions satisfactorily in Section 2 – Reading and responding, including some questions requiring some analytical skills. A few students did not read the questions carefully, however, and provided inappropriate or incomplete answers. It seemed that many students need to improve their skills in analysing information and summarising, rather than copying the whole paragraph or passage from the exam paper for their answers. Students need to understand that analysis and evaluation skills, as well as comprehension skills, are required in this section. The questions in this section may require students to look at the whole passage, not just one sentence or paragraph, to gain an answer.

Students are advised to consult their dictionaries when answering questions, as many of their responses contained spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. It is important that students do not provide information beyond the scope of the question and that they do not include prior knowledge of the topic if it is not included in the texts.

Most students performed well in Section 3 – Writing in Chinese. They completed the questions in the correct register, format and style. Some students did not read all the instructions carefully and did not correctly follow the requirements of the question.

In Section 3, the majority of students chose Question 8, 9 or 10 for their writing task. Most students who chose Question 9 produced a good piece of writing. Quite a few students did not understand Question 8 fully; it required students to present people's different views on the advantages and disadvantages of providing accommodation for overseas exchange students, not just their own opinions (in this case, it would have been a piece of personal writing).

In terms of content, in each of the five writing tasks, some students displayed a loss of balance between breadth and depth. In addition, a few students did not adhere to the format required, such as the different writing styles and text types. Students should be advised to develop a plan before they start writing.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Many students appeared to understand the two listening texts well and demonstrated their ability to summarise and analyse information; however, some students seemed to have trouble conveying their meaning in English. Students should use the reading time to focus on the questions in this section, so they can predict what the listening texts might be about. Students should also learn note-taking skills and provide as much relevant information as possible when answering each question. Most questions contained two or three aspects that needed to be answered, but some students focused on only one aspect of the question and missed the rest of the detail.

Text 1

Question 1

- He exercises every day.
- He sleeps soundly/well or he sleeps ten hours at night.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Because he is busy with his planning to go to study at an American university/with university matters next year

Question 2b.

- The good opportunity is the chance to go to an American university to do sports science/a course.
- He sees it as good because the American university is 50 per cent cheaper.

Part B – Answer in Chinese

In this part of the examination, students were required to demonstrate their understanding of aspects of a Chinese listening text by responding in Chinese. Most students showed a sound understanding of the content of the text.

Three marks were awarded for comprehension of the text and two marks were awarded for conveying information accurately and appropriately in Chinese.

Most students did well in Part B; however, students must ensure that they respond in complete sentences and that their sentences communicate their ideas in their own words. Some students answered in point form, taking extracts directly from the spoken text. This did not allow them to demonstrate their ability to communicate fluently in the language and thus they were not awarded full marks. Students need to ensure that they provide a full answer to each question.

Text 3

Question 3

- 她喜欢长城。
- 还有北京中学的中国同学非常友好。
- 但是她说汉语的机会不多，因为中国同学总是和他们说英语。

Section 2 – Reading, responding and translating

Part A – Answer in English

Most students completed the questions relating to the comprehension of a Chinese reading text in this part of the examination. Section 2, Part A, carried 15 marks, based on one text in Chinese. A number of questions were directly related to the content of the text, while other questions were deductive. Students should be prepared to comment not only on the content of the text, but also on the purpose of the text and the type of audience it is addressing.

Some students confused or misunderstood Questions 4c. and 4d. Question 4c. required students to describe Beijing's traffic conditions during rush hour and Question 4d. required students to give the advantages and disadvantages for cyclists in Beijing.

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In order to prepare for this section of the examination, students should read the questions carefully and think through their answer before giving it. They should also practise identifying and summarising the main points and ideas in the texts. It is not necessary to know the meaning of all unknown words, especially if they are not key words in the text, but students should try to understand the gist of the passage. Students are also reminded that all answers must be based on the information provided in the text and not on prior knowledge.

Text 4

Question 4a.

- The past: the kingdom of bikes
- The present: the capital of cars/automobiles/vehicles

Question 4b.

- they spend a lot of money (they make light of travelling from afar to Beijing)
- not to be scared of being tired and bad/poor air

Question 4c.

- too many people on buses
- motor-driven vehicles are often motionless (hardly moving) on the roads

Question 4d.

Advantages:

- a bike is very cheap
- cyclists can feel like they are flying and feel comfortable
- the roads are very good and cycling in Beijing is very easy

Disadvantages:

- cyclists can feel tired
- the air quality is poor

Question 4e.

Foreigners:

- love sports / are sporty people
- don't want to pollute the air

Chinese:

- might be poor and can't afford to buy a car
- have lower social status, because having a car is a symbol of social status

Part B – Answer in Chinese

This part of the examination assessed students' understanding of general and specific aspects of the text and their capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately in Chinese. Most students provided the correct information to adequately complete all questions. Some students lacked the skills needed to analyse and summarise the text, and they simply copied one or two paragraphs as their response. Students should take advantage of the fact that the questions in this section are given in both Chinese and English.

Text 5

Question 5

- 张利可能去美术班，因为他/她喜欢画画。
- 王平可能去时装队，因为她喜欢好看的衣服。
- 李秋喜欢吃西方的点心，所以她/他会去西点做法班。
- 高雨喜欢写汉字，他/她可能参加书法俱乐部。
- 谢欢对人的思想方法有兴趣，所以他/她可能参加心理学俱乐部。
- 白月的个人兴趣是花样游泳，所以她会参加水上运动队。
- 小明会参加学校天文俱乐部，因为他/她对天上的星星有兴趣。
- 小红想当女中音歌唱家，所以她会去声乐班。

Part C – Translation

Most students comprehended the translation passages well and conveyed the meaning of these passages accurately and fluently. Some students seemed to have a good comprehension of the passages in Chinese, but had poor expression in English. Students are reminded that Chinese and English are different in terms of syntax and expression and they should not translate word-for-word from Chinese.

Question 6

Nowadays many people don't like their jobs. Money is the only purpose of their work/They only work for money. They never seek perfection but only success. In their opinion wealth means success. Actually the major part of our/ human beings' happiness comes from work. If a person has passion in his work, he will not only feel happy but this will show that he has achieved a great deal as well. Work, thus, will become the major pleasure of our lives.

Question 7

Ma Li's parents like travelling. Consequently, she was also fascinated with sightseeing in her childhood. She was often travelling by herself while studying at university, and has been to many places in China as well as overseas. She has realised/discovered that she would be extremely happy if she can do what she enjoys to do.

Section 3 – Writing in Chinese

This section assessed the students' ability to express ideas, through the creation of an original text in Chinese, using the following criteria:

- relevance, breadth and depth
- appropriateness of structure and sequence
- accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

Students were required to write between 200 and 250 characters in Chinese on one of the five topics given. Each topic represented a different text type and style of writing (personal, imaginative, informative, persuasive and evaluative). All five questions were attempted, although there was a clear preference for the informative and evaluative writing tasks.

On the whole, students displayed a good knowledge of the different characteristics of the text type and the style of writing they chose; however, they should be aware that they need to provide all the features of the text type or writing style as required.

Students did not perform well on the criterion of 'relevance, breadth and depth'. Students should select a topic that is familiar to them and that they have good knowledge of, and they should exhibit a good range of relevant vocabulary. It should be a topic that asks for the kind of writing and text type that suits them best, so they are able to express themselves accurately.

Question 8

The following points could have been included.

- 利：学汉语、了解一些中国文化、知道一些中国学校的情况、交朋友、学会照顾你的客人、做你自己国家的形象大使
- 弊：文化冲突、性格不合、生活习惯不同、个人隐私少了、共同生活不方便
- Advantages: learn Chinese language, understand some Chinese culture, know something about education in China, establish some friendships, learn how to look after your guest, be an ambassador for your country
- Disadvantages: cultural conflict, unmatched personalities, different life habits, less privacy, having to share everything, inconvenience

Question 9

The following points could have been included.

- 学习：了解世界范围的学术环境、学术方面的多样化、比较澳大利亚和外国的教育
- 生活：培养独立性、了解一些异国文化、学习生活中一些常识
- 未来的工作：建立一定的人脉联系、了解一些外国的工作情况、在世界范围内拓展自己的视野以及事业
- Study: gain some knowledge about the academic environment in the world, the diversity of academic study and research; compare the education between Australia and education in a foreign country
- Life: become more independent, understand some foreign culture, learn some basic knowledge of others' daily lives

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- Future career: establish certain relationships with other students, know something about the career in foreign countries, extend the horizon for the future career

Question 10

The following points could have been included.

- 学习: 比以前紧张、如何应对、怎样提高汉语水平, 学习方法等
- 师生关系: 老师的教学对自己学习的影响、老师对自己世界观的影响、严师良友
- 课外活动: 运动、音乐、军训、兴趣俱乐部, 以及通过这些活动的收获
- Study: more pressure, how to cope, how to improve Chinese, learning methods
- Teacher–student relationship: teachers’ influence upon one’s study, teachers’ influence upon one’s vision of the world, strict teacher but good friend
- Extra curriculum activities: sports, music, cadets, different clubs and interests and what has been learned through these activities

Question 11

The following points could have been included.

- 比赛初期: 比分很接近, 双方势均力敌
- 比赛赛程过半: 双方各有精彩表现, 对方领先, 我们紧紧咬住比分
- 比赛最后阶段: 双方体力下降, 但我们不放弃、拼体力、拼意志, 最终结果是…
- The beginning stage: very close competition, both teams evenly matched
- Mid-way: both teams have some wonderful performances, the opposition slightly ahead but we refuse to let it go
- Last stage: physical fatigue from both teams, never give up, put up a life-and-death fight, the final result is…

Question 12

The following point could have been included.

- 三天中每天不同的奇遇和历险、最后的高潮
- Different encounters and adventures in each of the three days, reaching the climax eventually