

2021 VCE Japanese First Language oral external assessment report

General comments

The VCE Japanese First Language oral examination assesses students' knowledge and skills in using spoken language. It is important that students and teachers familiarise themselves with the specifications for oral examinations, available on the [VCE Japanese First Language examinations webpage](#). The examination has two sections – a presentation of up to five minutes (which includes a short introduction of no more than one minute) and a discussion of approximately five minutes.

It should be noted that during the oral examination:

- students may be asked a variety of questions with varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from the one students anticipate
- assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during either section of the examination; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
- assessors may also repeat or rephrase questions
- normal variation in assessor body language is acceptable.

Details of the assessment criteria and descriptors are published on the VCAA website. It is important that all teachers and students be familiar with the criteria and descriptors and that students use them as part of their examination preparation. This will help students to engage in a lively and interesting exchange with assessors. Although there are similarities between the assessment criteria for the presentation and discussion sections of the examination, the criteria assess two very different aspects of performance. Students who are well prepared are generally able to demonstrate their abilities and proficiency in the language.

It was apparent from the examination results that most students had taken time to prepare their material and to practise presenting it. However, students generally had more difficulty in discussing the material.

To do well in an oral examination, students must thoroughly know the material so they are able to present it clearly, confidently and logically. They must understand the material sufficiently well so that they can anticipate issues that are likely to arise and can influence the nature and direction of the subsequent discussion. They can then engage with the assessors fluently, confidently, concisely and relevantly. Without good preparation these outcomes are not possible.

Specific information

Section 1 – Presentation

Following a short introduction of no more than one minute, the student presents on a subtopic selected from the topic 'Language and culture through Literature and the Arts', using supporting objects and/or cue cards if

they wish. The presentation should last no longer than four minutes. The presentation should include a clear stance on the issue selected, relate clearly to the subtopic chosen for detailed study and be supported by evidence. The student is expected to refer to texts studied.

The defining characteristic of students who communicated their presentation effectively was their knowledge of the subject matter. This meant that students did not have to rely heavily on their cue cards. They communicated clearly and confidently, speaking directly to and engaging with the assessors. Their practiced communication skills allowed them to deliver their presentation at an appropriate speed and with a natural voice.

Some students relied too heavily on their cue cards due to a lack of confidence in their material, which in turn resulted in communication that was hesitant and uncertain, and lacked the natural flow and speed of a speaking voice.

In terms of content, presentations that scored highly were thoroughly researched and the material was clearly based on a variety of sources. Consequently, these presentations were informative, logically structured and developed to facilitate understanding of the material.

Presentations that did not score well demonstrated a lack of preparation. This impeded the students' ability to appropriately structure the material and elaborate on the matters raised.

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the presentation, the student discusses aspects of the selected issue with the assessors and should be prepared to clarify the points presented.

As with the presentations, effective communication in the discussion phase crucially depended on the students being thoroughly familiar with the subject matter. Familiarity enables students to be precise and concise, use appropriate formal language, be relevant in their comments and responses, and avoid the tendency to repeat ideas and language structures. These students' communication tended to be clear, confident and appropriately interactive.

Discussions that did not score highly tended to demonstrate a lack of understanding of the material. This inevitably resulted in the students following, rather than leading, the discussion. They were hesitant and uncertain of their comments and responses, with a tendency to use filler expressions and informal language when at a loss of what to say.

In terms of content, students who had carefully prepared their presentations and had a good understanding of the underlying issues tended to be confident, able to influence the form and direction of the discussion, used appropriate formal language, were relevant and elaborated on the issues raised without being either repetitive or hesitant.

Some students were unable to demonstrate a sufficient grasp of the material. This resulted in a lack of confidence, undue reticence in their interactions with assessors, a lack of control, and being unable to elaborate fluidly and relevantly in their interactions with assessors.