



2009 LOTE: Chinese Second Language GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Many students demonstrated thorough preparation for the Conversation and Discussion sections of the oral examination. Some students participated in the oral exchanges actively and enthusiastically, taking initiative and responding appropriately. As a result, these students performed well, even if their language contained some lexical and grammatical errors. However, there were some students who had trouble sustaining the exchange due to lack of preparation. In addition, there were some students who needed more examination strategies and confidence in order to further elaborate upon their ideas and opinions.

In the Conversation section, the majority of students understood the questions assessors asked and were able to present relevant responses. Performances varied in the Discussion section, ranging from some outstanding students to others who struggled to maintain an effective interaction with the assessors. Some students demonstrated a thorough preparation of their topic and were able to explore their sub-topic in sufficient depth. However, other students relied on a memorised mini-presentation about their topic, and struggled to cope when interrupted by the assessors.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

This task consisted of a seven-minute conversation about the student's personal world, which included school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. This section provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to speak Chinese in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way.

Communication: Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively **Clarity of expression**

Successful students provided extensive responses to the questions asked, confidently moving the exchange forward while simultaneously using accurate language, an excellent range of vocabulary and complex structures. Some students had an effective interaction with the assessors and used good repair strategies.

Students should not assume they will be asked the same questions that were asked in any practice oral examinations. To allow students to show their language ability, assessors may challenge them by asking questions which require extra information or sophisticated responses. In this situation, students need to listen carefully to the assessors and respond relevantly and appropriately.

Students should not mention the name of their school but speak in general terms about their school. Several students used a couple of English words in the conversation, such as 'I mean...', 'Oh, sorry', etc. It is important for students to know that once they walk into the assessment room, everything they say except their student number needs to be in Chinese. Although there were some errors in the four tones and the pronunciation of *zhi, chi, shi* and *zi, ci, si*, students were mostly able to emphasise their opinions and ideas by using intonation and stress. Tempo was also generally well maintained.

Content: Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Many students sustained a coherent conversation and expressed their ideas effectively. Those who elaborated on and explored their ideas with ease achieved the highest marks. They came up with interesting responses and engaged the assessors by using eye contact and appropriate body language. Some of them enjoyed using idiomatic Chinese phrases and proverbs which not only sounded impressive but also fully reflected their appreciation of Chinese culture. Some students lost valuable marks by failing to enter into a more detailed discussion, even though they had understood the questions. Weaker students gave monosyllabic responses and waited to be supported with further questions.

Some students expressed themselves naturally and vividly as if they were eager to tell the assessors about their personal world under examination conditions. Other students understood most of the questions, but were unable to expand upon their answers and therefore did not perform as well.



Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Most students expressed themselves clearly in a linguistically and culturally acceptable way. Many used a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar, which was crucial to attaining high marks. Successful students showed consistent use of style and register and were able to rephrase when necessary. However, some students struggled when using complex sentence patterns. In addition, students need to pay attention to the accurate and appropriate use of measure words, such as: 我们学校有一个图书馆 rather than 我们学校有一间图书馆 and 我有一本汉英字典 rather than 我有一个汉英字典.

Section 2 – Discussion

In the discussion of the Detailed Study, students were required to indicate to the assessors the main focus of the sub-topic chosen in no more than one minute, alerting assessors to any objects brought in to support the discussion. It is the students' decision whether they would like to have three or four aspects in their Detailed Study as long as there is a good focus which can be elaborated on by them and explored by the assessors. It is not necessary for students to pause between aspects and wait for the assessors to write down each aspect they have mentioned. Most students performed competently in the discussion; however, some were under-prepared and had difficulty in responding to unexpected questions. Some students did not specify the focus of their Detailed Study in their one-minute introduction.

Communication: Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Clarity of expression

A number of students were competent in their use of language for communication. They were able to handle questions well and had sufficient knowledge to maintain an even flow of conversation during the seven-minute discussion.

Students' performance should not be affected by unexpected questions asked by the assessors. Instead, they can either say '老师，对不起，这部分我没学过，可是我学过 ...' or use their own background knowledge to respond, as it is the language skills which are assessed rather than students' common knowledge. Students cannot assume that assessors will only ask them the questions they have considered at school. In addition, they should not expect assessors to spend the same amount of time on each aspect of their Detailed Study.

Some assessors experienced difficulty understanding what students said, especially the names of the sub-topic and some unfamiliar words students used in the discussion. It is very important that students practise the pronunciation of these difficult words in order to express themselves clearly.

Some students did not expect the assessors to interrupt them during the assessment. They need to understand that this section is a 'discussion' and not a 'mini-presentation'. There should be plenty of interaction between the students and assessors during the discussion. Sometimes, the assessors found that it was hard for them to get a word in.

Content: Capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic

Many students had prepared their topic thoroughly. Some students discussed their resources in depth and explained connections between the texts with elaborate, in-depth answers. They discussed what they had enjoyed and found interesting about their topic, and demonstrated excellent understanding and knowledge of their Detailed Study. These students were able to follow the flow of discussion, keep their answers relevant, provide a range of information and ideas on the topic and support their opinions with evidence. However, some students tended to rely too heavily on the assessors to guide them through the discussion. At times students answered in very brief sentences when they could have conveyed their understanding of the sub-topic to a greater extent.

Many students chose a topic which reflected their interests, allowing them to exhibit their linguistic ability and promote discussion of the issues and resources studied. Some interesting topics were: 齐白石和他的画 (Qi Baishi and His Paintings), 吉祥物 (Chinese Mascots), 丝绸之路 (The Silk Road), 中国的五颜六色 (Chinese Colours) and 风水 (Chinese Feng Shui).

Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

This criterion emphasises the accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar. Better students exhibited an excellent range of vocabulary and sophisticated expressions, and used accurate grammatical structures.

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The Discussion section is quite different from the Conversation section. The language used in the Discussion will be less predictable, as there will be many new and unfamiliar words in the resources used by the students. Students should not only master these words but also practise using them in discussion. There were many occasions when students used sophisticated words and expressions in their introduction but were frequently unable to hear and understand them when used by the assessors.