

LOTE: Japanese First Language GA 3: Examination

Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Teachers and students have commented that the course was a good one, that it developed students' language skills, and that the assessment process was fair.

Student performance varied widely from exemplary to below average. It seemed that the results appeared to reflect students' attitude and study skills, their understanding of the course requirements including examination specifications and choice of the Detailed Study sub-topics.

Results depend on students' self-discipline and application. Many students did not appear to fully understand the course. It is recommended that more class time be allocated to the development of students' study skills and understanding of the course as well as of examination procedures.

There were few noticeable problems with aural/oral skills. Rather, students' performance depended on their attitude and whether they understood the oral examination procedures, for example the use of cue cards, and giving the first name only at the beginning of the examination, not the full name.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Presentation

In the oral presentation, many students did not appear to know that there was a time limit of five minutes, and that they were not allowed to read from a script except when referring to a cue card (no more than 15 x 12.5 cm) on which only notes in point form should be written.

The choice of sub-topics for presentation was important. The most popular sub-topic this year was society's reaction to physical disability and its effect on all those concerned. For the Detailed Study, the study design suggests selecting 'at least three texts, drawn from the field of Literature and/or the Arts' (these can include aural and visual texts) in order to 'explore their sub-topic in sufficient depth'. Most students used the same source materials to study this sub-topic, such as *Gotai Fumanzoku*, *Deai no California*, 'Barrier-free Japan' and a Japanese TV series 'Beautiful Life'. Other successful sub-topics were 'education' 'dealing with bullying at school', 'using Honorifics' and 'the communication gap between mother and teenager'. There were some excellent presentations. In better presentations, students were able to pick up the main issue/s from the texts studied, to explore these issue/s in depth by drawing good examples not only from the texts studied but also from their own environment, and to express their own views/ideas on the topic convincingly. Generally speaking, few students demonstrated the ability to read texts critically or to form an opinion on the texts studied.

Students need to choose their sub-topics carefully, study in depth a minimum of three texts with the objective of gaining a broader perspective, to grasp clearly an issue/s discussed in the texts, and to form their own ideas/conclusion/thoughts based on sound reasoning.

Assessment

Capacity to present information appropriately and effectively

Three areas were important: a) accuracy, variety and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar, b) clarity of expressions such as pronunciation, intonation, stress, tempo, and c) capacity to engage with the audience.

In area a), student's use of a range of appropriate vocabulary, sophisticated expressions, accurate grammar and appropriate style were assessed; in b), manner of presentation using clear diction, delivering the presentation at the correct speed, voice and pauses was assessed; and in c), the quality of contents centred on an issue/s, the use of cue cards and the length of presentation as well as whether the student demonstrated the ability to engage the audience's (assessor's) interest by discussing the topic from a refreshing viewpoint were assessed.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Assessment was focused on the following three areas: a) relevance of information, b) range of information and ideas, and c) the student's capacity to support/elaborate information with reasons/examples evidence/new ideas.

For a) assessors considered whether the information and/or ideas given by the student related to the topic studied; for b) the depth of research, and whether the ideas and opinions were linked to the contents of the texts studied; and for c) the student's ability to support/elaborate information with appropriate reasons/appropriate examples/and evidence.

Drawing examples from students' own experiences/environment to illustrate their points of view was persuasive and effective. For example, one student discussed having a disabled person in the family and different reactions to the situation by other members of the family. The student referred to episodes, incidents, themes and opinions from the texts studied, and then drew an objective conclusion. It was humorous at times as well as moving.

Section 2 – Discussion

Some students were able to discuss their subjects in depth, using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. However, they were in the minority. Most students handled their topics superficially, being content to repeat a simplistic, conventional opinion referring to some information from one of the texts. Assessors felt that those students might not have read the entire text but only its synopses. Students should realise that it is not sufficient to know the contents of the texts studied but that they must pick up the issues and express their own thoughts/ideas/reactions by supporting these with plausible reasons and good examples.

'Physical disability', and 'education-bullying' were suitable topics for several reasons. These are topical subjects and offer a number of different focal points. Another advantage is an easy accessibility to a variety of media of general interest to senior secondary students, such as autobiography, short story, article, radio interview, film, and TV drama.

If the same topic is set for a large class, it is important that there is scope for each student to study it with a different slant in order to avoid a uniform approach to the topic, expressing the same opinions/ideas by referring to the same examples from the texts. It may be advisable that the same topic not be repeated year after year, and that reference materials be replaced with some fresh material each year in order to encourage students to employ new approaches in dealing with their Detailed Study sub-topics.

Assessment

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Three areas were important: a.) accuracy, variety and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar, b.) clarity of expression (pronunciation, intonation, stress, tempo), and c.) capacity to link with assessors.

In a), the assessment focus was on the range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammar, and the use of appropriate style (DESU/MASU); in b), on clear diction, delivery speed, pause, audibility; and in c) on student's ability to link with assessors, to exchange comments spontaneously and naturally, and to redirect focus when necessary.

In general, students maintained an appropriate level and style of language, and used a good to excellent range of vocabulary except in cases where students did not seem to have prepared the topic sufficiently.

Relevance, breath and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Assessment was focused on the following three areas: a.) relevance of information/ideas, b.) range of information/ideas, and c.) capacity to support/elaborate information with reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas

In a), the assessment focus was on whether information/ideas given by the student in discussing the sub-topic were relevant. In b), assessors looked into the depth of research, quality of information/ideas, and whether the student was able to move beyond the issues concerned, for example, to reflect on related experiences; in c), the focus was on the student's ability to elaborate and refer to supporting information from the texts and other resources, and to present firm evidence and clear reasoning rather than stating a generally accepted, simplistic opinion. A considerable number of students seemed to be content just doing the latter.

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Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The feedback regarding the revised format of the examination from both teachers and students was positive. The paper was balanced, the topics were relevant to the age group, and the language level was suitable. Most students did very well in Section 1. Mistakes were slips rather than misunderstandings. Some students did not show sufficient skill in writing a concise summary of a radio interview. Students are reminded that if the word limit is specified, they must answer within that word limit.

In Section 2, a number of students did not grasp the issues discussed in the two texts, namely, two opposing views on the wildlife protection. It was necessary for students to refer to both texts, to understand each view and the reasons behind these, and then write a persuasive speech script expressing their own view and suggest a possible solution to this problem. There were some excellent written pieces, but most students simply summarised Text 1.

In Section 3, students were required to choose one of the topics; to write a composition in one of the required text types. Most successful responses were written on the topics for Questions 9 and 11. Both required students to produce an imaginative written piece. In handling these topics, students were freely exploring ideas and were able to describe scenes vividly in their own style and language. On the other hand, works on Questions 8 and 10 were more constrained, and students predisposed to conventional thinking as their writing displayed limited originality.

Many students did not have a clear idea on how to use *genkoo yooshi* correctly in accordance with the specific requirements for each text type (e.g. article, letter, speech script, story). It is necessary for First Language students to familiarise themselves in the use of *genkoo yooshi*. Punctuation and paragraphing also require greater attention.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Part A

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Sample answers

Text 1

Question 1

電子メール、メール

6 千万、二人に一人

6 8

お互いの顔、相手の顔

Question 2

学校：（例を一つ挙げる）

授業中にゲームをする

授業中にメールを送る

一般：（例を二つ挙げる）

大声で話す

映画館で携帯電話のスイッチをつけたままにしておく

成人式の最中に友達と携帯電話で話す

Criteria

The capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts

Part B

Text 2

Question 3

737 校、30%、1 位 韓国、2 位 中国、3 位 アメリカ

Question 4

1) 日本の経済不況・景気後退

2) 米国での入学許可のレベルが厳しくなった

Question 5

1) 日本に近い 2) 安全 3) 生活費が安い / 英語圏

Question 6

長期留学について、良い点と悪い点を二つずつ挙げて、会話の内容を約 200 字にまとめる。

良い点 (二つ挙げる)

- 若い人は外国語を覚えやすい
- 自分の国の文化と違う文化を体験することによって世界を見る目が広がる
- 自分に合った教育内容を選ぶことができるから、
独立心が養われる
将来の進路を選ぶのに幅が広がる

悪い点 (二つ挙げる)

- 若者はまだ精神的に安定していない。だからカルチャーショックを受けたり、ホームシックにかかったりしやすい。
- 母国語が十分に発達していないので、自分の国の言葉を犠牲にして外国語を学ぶことになる
- 留学後帰国してから日本の文化になじまない
- 日本の社会と文化を拒否する 日本の文化に対して反感を持つようになる

Criteria

The capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts

The capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately

Most students gave correct answers for Questions 3 to 5. Question 6 required students to give a concise summary within the word limit of approximately 200 *ji*. In addition, they needed to pay attention to structure, accuracy and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar, and *kanji* and *kana* spelling.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Criteria

The capacity to identify and synthesise relevant information and ideas from the texts

Appropriateness of structure and sequence

Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Question 7

Two texts were given for this question presenting two opposing views on the issue of wildlife protection. Students were required to write a script for a speech to be delivered at the speech contest for high school students. Students needed to identify the protector's points of view and of those who see the need for population control to synthesise the information in a concise and balanced manner; and then to conclude with the students' own views on the issue suggesting a possible solution.

Section 3 – Writing in Japanese

Criteria

Appropriateness of structure and sequence

Relevance, breadth and depth of content

Accuracy and vocabulary and grammar (including punctuation and, where relevant, script)

Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Question 8

Students were given four topic choices. Many students chose Question 8 and wrote a magazine article on school rules in Japan. The question stated that they were to present, in a balanced manner, two opposing views, the one supporting a relaxation on school rules, the other the maintenance of strict rules. On this subject, students often lacked objectivity and presented their own emotional reactions to the subject.

Question 9

Most successful responses were found among students who chose this topic. There were vivid accounts of an imaginary lifestyle 50 years from now. Each student showed different creative styles and unique approaches to the topic.

Question 10

The text type required for this topic was a letter to the editor. There were one or two letters in which students were able to express mature thoughts, but in general, they were unable to handle this topic from a wider social perspective.

Question 11

This topic also produced some very original, readable stories. A few students, however, missed the point and instead of writing about the balloon dog's life with its owner seen through the dog's eyes, they wrote a story on balloon dogs.