

Interstate Assessed Languages Beginners Level

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



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INTERSTATE ASSESSED LANGUAGES BEGINNERS LEVEL

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Interstate Assessed Languages at Beginners Level Chief Assessor's report provides general information and feedback about the school assessment component and the oral examination component for Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish at Beginners Level, relevant for SACE students.

The report gives an overview of how students performed in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. The report provides information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards and the quality of student performance.

Assessment reports for the written examination for Interstate Assessed Languages at Beginners Level are available at 'HSC Examination Papers and Notes' at the New South Wales Board of Studies website www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc_exams/

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Students were generally adequately prepared for school assessment and most of them demonstrated a satisfactory level of language skills and knowledge.

In general, most work submitted for moderation complied with the assessment format as prescribed in the subject outline, with tasks appropriately designed for the purpose of assessing students' level of skill in the language.

To give opportunity for students to achieve their best potential, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to task design. Tasks should be clear and assessment conditions appropriate.

There was a variety of standards presented for moderation. Marking schemes based on the performance standards were well used. Teachers are encouraged to design tasks which clearly specify the purpose, audience and the context for the students. It was evident that teachers who had familiarised themselves with the Stage 2 subject outline and school assessment requirements had prepared their students well and based their assessment decisions appropriately on the performance standards.

Assessment Type 1: Interaction

Most students showed an appropriate command of oral language at this level. An interaction assessment task has to give students an opportunity to interact with others to exchange information, ideas, opinions, or experiences. Teacher questions are intended to be used as a prompt and should give the students the opportunity to extend their answers, rather than the teacher monopolise the conversation.

All conversations, and presentation and discussions to a variety of audiences were voice recorded. The quality of sound was clear. However, where the interaction is

presented between students, it is imperative that the students are clearly identified on the recording. Some interactions appeared over-scripted, and if the interaction was between two students, some students' grades could potentially become hindered by their classmates' memory loss.

Most students adhered to the required time limits. Teachers are reminded that to exceed this limit is considered a breach of rules and in the interest of fairness for all students any interaction which exceeds the prescribed limit cannot be assessed or considered at moderation.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

Grades allocated in the Text Production tasks were by far the most consistent. A variety of tasks were presented to students and generally they were designed to meet all levels of the performance standards. Tasks need to be specific and appropriate; with a clear text type. Revision of different forms of writing and scaffolding may help students do their assessments with confidence.

Although the complexity and elaboration of responses varied greatly, it was noted that most students proved to be able to successfully produce relevant and appropriate responses, with a good level of accuracy.

Students are reminded to take time to check their punctuation, spelling and syntax after writing their texts.

Assessment Type 3: Text Analysis

The Text Analysis was the assessment type with most variation. Most students showed an appropriate command of Language at this level, and the ability to extract information and interpret intention from both written and spoken texts.

Students are advised to take time to clearly identify the context and intention of each text for analysis. Students are also expected to answer questions in their own words, and refer to the original text to support their response, rather than extract a few disconnected words from the original text as a way of response.

Teachers must ensure that the assessment design criteria, as outlined in the assessment task sheet and in the learning and assessment plan, have been assessed. The text analysis is an opportunity to demonstrate learning of interpretation and reflection. Specific feature IR2 (Analysis) would most logically be assessed by a text analysis assessment task, yet some tasks did not provide the opportunity to do so. It is also an opportunity for bilingual skills to be developed and insights into language, culture, and reflection demonstrated.

Questions should be designed to give all students the opportunity to perform at all levels of the performance standards.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Examination

Oral Examination

Any assessment process (oral examinations in particular) is very stressful for students and every effort is made to help them feel as at ease as possible. Examiners understand this and do keep it in mind when they are assessing the students. Students who performed well overcame their nerves and went beyond minimal responses in the oral examination.

It was also noted in the oral examination for some languages that there was a high number of heavily scripted, memorized presentations that did not lend themselves to further discussion. Some topics don't lend themselves well to further questions. The examination provides opportunities for students to go beyond a formulaic use of language and show some understanding of the topic for discussion. Most successful students provided spontaneous responses, as opposed to repeating memorized chunks of text.

Most students managed well, showing politeness and using conventional greetings. Although it was obvious to examiners that most students had been well advised as how to prepare for the examination and most of them were adequately prepared, it was noted that some students could have benefited from a little more guidance from their teachers when choosing and tackling their topics for discussion. Examiners noted that some students were unable to discuss their topic of choice at any length beyond repeating a memorized basic script.

Practice is essential in the preparation for an oral examination and students are encouraged to participate in as many opportunities to use oral language as possible.

Generally most students were able to maintain a conversation with the examiners, the scope of their answers ranging from the very basic and formulaic to many examples of excellent use of language. Students are reminded that in this section of the examination fluency and naturalness of the conversation is also important, as well as accuracy. Therefore, hesitations and requests for clarification are not necessarily considered to be evidence of lack of skill, but just a regular part of natural oral language. Students are encouraged to practice appropriate ways to seek clarification in language, and avoid the use of English.

Students are reminded that any sample questions available in the SACE website are not prescriptive and that they should not expect them to appear literally in the course of the conversation with examiners. Some students experienced difficulty when examiners formulated questions differently or when examiners rephrased the student's own response.

More successful students had prepared for the exam and demonstrated the ability to go beyond minimal responses, made use of different linguistic resources (a variety of structures, tenses, expressions, etc.) and avoided responding with one-word sentences.

Oral examinations conducted using teleconference technologies are at times used. Teachers are reminded not to remain in the same room where the examination is

taking place. Care should be taken to avoid interruptions when an examination is based at a non-central venue. Although the use of technology is very satisfactory overall, students sitting their oral examination by teleconference should expect and prepare for minimal echo effect or slight delay of the sound signal.

Chinese

A good variety in topics was noted. Generally, students found birthdays a challenging topic to discuss. A common error noted was the use of 去 and 去过.

Spanish

Students are encouraged to make use of clear chronological (*primero, la semana pasada, el año próximo*, etc.) and logical (*aunque, por eso, si*, etc.) markers in the conversation part of their oral examination. This will assist them in compensating for any lack of detail produced by accuracy errors such as wrong conjugations of verbs.

Students should be particularly careful when pronouncing vowels and some distinctive sounds such as /t/, /r/ or /ñ/.

Two common mistakes were the inclusion of a definite article preceding subject titles (*'estudio la matemática y la biología'*) and the inclusion of indefinite articles before family members (*'tengo un padre y una madre'*).

Written Examination

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OPERATIONAL ADVICE

In general, materials for moderation were packaged and organised adequately. However, not all schools included learning and assessment plans, including the addendum (where applicable). Occasionally a small number of schools did not include all assessment tasks for moderation, or provide explanation for this using the 'Variations – Moderation Materials' form.

Schools are reminded to organize students' samples by assessment type. It is helpful to the moderators to have supporting transcripts or discs with any audio-visual material their students were requested to analyse, when appropriate and available.

To ensure the consistency and fairness of the assessment across schools, it is essential that all students' material is easily accessible, clearly organised and correctly labelled. Most importantly, all care should be taken when recording and processing students' grades for each particular assessment type, in order to avoid clerical errors.

Interstate Assessed Languages (beginners)
Chief Assessor