



2010 LOTE: Chinese Second Language Advanced GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination consists of a conversation and a discussion related to the Detailed Study. Teachers and students are advised to refer to the *VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced Study Design* for further details of the examination.

The assessment criteria for the oral examination, Section 1 – Conversation, are:

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- clarity of expression
- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

The criteria for Section 2 – Discussion are identical as those for Section 1 – Conversation, with the exception of the third dot point, which is:

- capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic.

Generally, students' oral performance levels reflected their degree of understanding of the examination requirements and how well they had prepared for the examination. While many students handled the general conversation and discussion of the Detailed Study with ease, others responded to questions with apparently memorised answers and were not able to easily carry forward the interaction with assessors.

Students generally answered the assessors' questions, although some students did not listen carefully to given questions and gave irrelevant or unrelated responses. Some students were able to respond to questions by planning their answers in a logical way. Other students had some difficulty organising their thoughts. Students are encouraged to prepare for this part of the oral examination and not depend only on rote-learned material.

The following areas should be addressed so that students maximise their performance in the oral examination. Students should:

- take their time and speak slowly; students who make a mistake or forget should simply apologise (对不起) and start again
- answer the question that they are asked and seek clarification if they do not understand the question
- avoid memorising paragraphs by heart; students may find that a more effective approach is to learn a number of sentences related to a topic and vary them
- elaborate on information in an interesting way
- practise strategies to influence the direction of the conversation. If student is asked a question in an area they do not feel comfortable with, they should try to link their reply to another area in which they feel more confident
- learn all the key question words and their alternatives
- practise repair strategies.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students were expected to interact with assessors and talk about aspects of their personal world, including family and friends, school and activities, interests and future aspirations.

Communication

This criterion assesses:

- the student's capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange
- pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo



- effective control of language to convey linguistic and culturally appropriate meaning.

Student performance was the highest on this criterion. Most students had prepared thoroughly and performed well. It is important that students give appropriate and adequate answers to the questions and ask for clarification when they are unsure. A longer response will not in itself lead to higher marks. Students need to organise ideas, use correct sentence structures and a variety of appropriate vocabulary to support their communication.

Students who performed very well gave appropriate and interesting responses. Unfortunately, some students occasionally used English words in their conversation; for example, the names of their school subjects and activities. Students are reminded that they should not state their name or the name of their school.

Content

This criterion assesses:

- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- range of information/ideas
- capacity to support/elaborate on ideas/opinions with reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas.

In general, students were able to talk about their family, school, hobbies and ambitions. Students are encouraged to answer the question asked rather than talking about something only slightly related.

Strong students were proactive and able to connect the different aspects of their life and situation so that the conversation was carried forward. Some students offered inconsistent information and opinions.

Students' performance on this criterion was slightly lower than for the communication criterion but higher than in the language criterion. Students are encouraged to support or elaborate on information, ideas and opinions with reasons, examples and, where appropriate, evidence. Students' responses should avoid generalisations and stereotypes. It is better that students express their own opinions rather than memorise statements.

Language

This criterion assesses:

- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- variety of vocabulary and grammar
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- appropriateness of register.

The performance levels of students in this criterion varied. Some students were able to demonstrate an awareness of appropriate style and register, such as respectful forms for older generations and modest ways of talking about their own strengths.

Students are encouraged to include a range of expressions in the conversation such as 'although', 'since', 'not only but also', 'as long as' and 'prefer to'; some students used idioms and metaphors. Often students neglected to use certain wider vocabulary and a variety of grammar to shape their speech. It is important that students are able to self-correct their errors. Many students did not have a broad vocabulary but were able to successfully repair their sentences through simple and alternative self-correction strategies.

Grammar and language misuse was an issue for some less successful students. For example, 功课越来越大 (越多) ; 设施丰富 (齐全 , 完善) 用微波炉ding食物 (热食物) ; 走狗 (带狗散步) and 肉球 (肉丸子) . Students should check with their teacher or a dictionary to confirm appropriate phrases.

Section 2 – Discussion

This section included a one-minute introduction and seven minutes of discussion on a chosen topic related to the texts studied. Students are reminded that there is no longer a need to introduce their selected topic for Detailed Study with the sentence 'I have studied language and culture through Literature and the Arts'. Students and teachers are strongly encouraged to refer to the *VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced Study Design* when preparing for the oral examination.

In the Discussion students need to:



- indicate a sub-topic
- give a brief one-minute introduction and the main focus of the sub-topic
- make reference to resources used. It is suggested that a range of different kinds of texts might include novels, plays, movies or articles
- remember that cue cards are not allowed in the Second Language Advanced oral examination.

Most students managed to maintain a high level of relevance and accuracy when responding to questions. Students who performed extremely well demonstrated some degree of authenticity, clarity, spontaneity and an ability to justify a point of view.

The following advice should be noted for students to maximise their performance during the Discussion. Students should:

- convey information and develop ideas and opinions during the discussion; the student should be able to give facts (sources) and opinions (evidence) relevant to the focus of their sub-topic
- introduce their sub-topic first and indicate aspects they would like to discuss, stating the texts they studied
- be prepared to talk about the reasons for their choice of sub-topic
- ensure that any support materials are simple, clear and relevant; materials must have only minimal Chinese language, such as headings or labels
- be prepared for the assessors to ask them what they have studied if they do not indicate this in the one-minute introduction
- use complete sentences when answering and expand on each point as much as possible
- practise repair strategies such as seeking clarification, apologising and coping with false starts
- anticipate possible areas of discussion, but practise coping strategies if the discussion takes an unexpected turn.

References used for the Detailed Study that are not in the Chinese language are not recommended. Students should be advised that it is not necessary to bring reference materials such as books or magazines to the examination.

The Discussion should focus on an issue related to an aspect of the language and culture of Chinese-speaking communities. Students are encouraged to use a range of texts as resources to support their Detailed Study.

The topics chosen should reflect the interests of students and inspire them to elaborate on information and to respond with their opinions. Topics that were too narrow or too broad and sophisticated to organise, and topics that were too superficial or lacked depth, proved problematic.

Topics were broad-ranging and included The Analects of Confucius (论语); Daoist School (道家); The Confucianists (儒家); Thirty-six Analects (三十六计); Birthday salutations and felicitations (祝寿); The Four Treasures of Study – Writing Brush, Ink stick, Ink slab and Paper (文房四宝); Manchus (满族); The Ancestral temple/Clan hall (祠堂); Stuffed dumplings (汤圆); Hong Kong Doufu (香港豆腐); Tiger culture in Guangdong Province (广东虎文化); The Shanghai Subway (上海地铁); Chinese Medicine (中医); The Change in Chinese lifestyle (中国人生活方式的改变); Hanging coffins (悬棺); Studying Chinese books (读中国历史书).

The Detailed Study needs structure and the title should not be ambiguous. The texts selected should be appropriate for the level of the student and should lend themselves to discussion.

Communication

This criterion assesses:

- students' capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange
- pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo
- effective control of languages to convey linguistic and culturally appropriate meaning.

Choosing topics and sub-topics that suit students' interests and levels of proficiency is crucial. Some students tend to choose difficult or rare topics to demonstrate their unique choice. This is acceptable so long as the topics chosen conform to the study design and are related to the Chinese-speaking community. However, some students were not able



to construct the content at their own level and instead pieced information together. Some students did not choose topics that allowed them to extend their development. Some topics were not specific to the Chinese community and thus were barely related to the requirements of Chinese Second Language Advanced Detailed Study.

Some students tended to recite content and were unable to respond when they were asked unexpected questions. Students are expected to give their opinion on the topic and support their argument with relevant information.

Content

This criterion assesses:

- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- range of information/ideas
- capacity to support/elaborate on ideas/opinions including reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas.

Student performance was the lowest on this criterion. Students who performed well prepared their Detailed Study logically and sequentially and were able to discuss their knowledge of the subject, their opinions and their own analyses. The use of a variety of resources such as novels, plays and feature films in this area is recommended. Students are allowed to use support material, such as photographs or diagrams, provided that it has very minimal language in Chinese.

Some students were not well prepared and had chosen topics they were unable to discuss in depth. Consequently, they were often presentations of information only, with little scope for expressing opinions or ideas about the chosen topic.

Only a few students were unable to answer the questions related to the topic they had chosen. Students need to understand that the discussion should be a discussion related to their topic in detail. It is recommended that students focus on a particular topic or sub-topic. Students should also learn how to keep both depth and breadth in balance within the seven-minute discussion.

It was evident that some students had compiled information from their resources and references. When asked what they had learned from the resources and references, they either could not connect with the topic they had chosen or responded that this was not a part of their research.

Language

This criterion assesses:

- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- variety of vocabulary and grammar
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- appropriateness of register.

Students who performed well on this criterion had selected a topic that interested them and that was at a language level suited their ability. In general, students had prepared well for this criterion, although a few students made mistakes with sentence structure and grammar.

Students should be aware that following their initial answers assessors will often ask further questions. Rote-learned passages will not help students to cope with spontaneous questions.

Students and teachers are reminded that the oral examination is designed primarily to assess the students' knowledge and skill in using spoken Chinese. The *VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced Study Design* provides advice regarding the Detailed Study, prescribed topics and sub-topics. Teachers and students are strongly advised to refer to the study design when choosing and preparing topics for the examination.