



## 2010 LOTE: Chinese Second Language GA 3: Examination

### Oral component

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination has two sections: Conversation and Discussion. In both sections, the majority of students responded readily and clearly to the questions, giving interesting information and opinions. It was evident that most students had prepared well; however, some students had difficulty expressing themselves due to inadequate preparation.

#### SPECIFIC INFORMATION

##### Section 1 – Conversation

The seven-minute Conversation is about the student's personal world, including aspects such as school and home life, family, friends, interests and aspirations. This section allows students to demonstrate their ability to speak Chinese in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way.

Most students performed well in the Conversation section of this year's examination. They understood the questions asked and were able to develop their responses and advance the exchange, providing opinions and additional information. Some students were also willing to take the initiative, despite some vocabulary and grammatical errors. However, those who gave a memorised mini-presentation about the topic had to be interrupted by the assessors.

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

Many students were able to interact with the assessors and demonstrate effective communication and repair strategies. They used a good range of vocabulary and expressed interesting opinions. Some students moved the exchange forward confidently and engaged the assessors by using humour, eye contact and body language. However, there was a small number of students who relied too heavily upon rote-learned responses, and these students experienced difficulty in expanding on or justifying their opinions.

During the 15-minute oral examination, students are required to sit facing two assessors. However, a couple of students asked the assessors whether they could stand during the examination as they believed that they could perform better while standing rather than sitting. This is not encouraged. Several students used a couple of English words in the conversation such as 'Oh well', 'sorry' and 'Yes', 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.

Listening skills are essential for success in the oral examination. It is important that students understand the key phrases in the questions to allow them to respond relevantly and appropriately. Students should also pause to allow assessors to ask further questions as the Conversation is an exchange rather than students' own mini-presentation. Students should remember that pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo are also assessed under the communication criterion. Key words in the conversation need to be emphasised for a more vivid and effective exchange.

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

A number of students were able to maintain a relevant conversation and convey their ideas efficiently. They spoke effectively about their family life, school subjects, extra-curricular activities, friends, part-time jobs and future plans. Areas that seemed to be more difficult for students to discuss were justifying why they liked a subject and giving reasons for a career choice. Students are encouraged to pay close attention to these areas when preparing for the examination.

Students who performed well expanded upon and explored their ideas with ease and offered engaging content. These students were keen to initiate topics and to sustain the conversation without much support from the assessors. Some students understood most of the questions but were unable to expand on their answers. The less successful students gave monosyllabic responses and waited for further questions.

Students are reminded that the assessors will use what students' say as prompts for further conversation. If a student says that their favourite sport is tennis, they should be prepared to explain why. This student may provide more details



about why playing tennis is fun and the benefits of playing tennis. Some students gave only single-sentence responses such as ‘因为打网球很有意思/Because it’s fun to play tennis’.

**Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar**

**Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar**

Most students were able to express themselves clearly by using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar. Some students need to pay more attention to the interrogative words such as 什么样 (what kind of), 怎么样/怎样 (how), 谁 (who), 哪儿 (where), 哪 (which), in order to respond more appropriately. Some misused language or grammar included 我学汉语开始在七年级 (我在七年级的时候开始学汉语/ I started to learn Chinese in Year 7), 汉语比英语不一样 (汉语和英语不一样/Chinese is different from English), 我下年想去中国 (我明年想去中国/I’m going to China next year), 我不去过中国 (我没去过中国/I haven’t been to China).

**Section 2 – Discussion**

Students were required to give a brief introduction to the Detailed Study by indicating the main focus of their topic and advising assessors of any objects they had brought in to support the discussion. Capable students demonstrated very good linguistic skills and possessed excellent knowledge of the content related to the prescribed topics. Some students had difficulties in responding when they were asked unexpected questions. The less successful students seemed to struggle with simple questions and grammatical structures. There was a small number of students who did not specify the focus of their Detailed Study in their introduction and this made assessing their linguistic ability difficult.

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

**Clarity of expression**

In the discussion of the Detailed Study performances varied, ranging from some outstanding students to others who had trouble sustaining the interaction. Some students demonstrated a thorough preparation of their topic and were able to explore their sub-topic in sufficient depth. Many students handled questions well and had sufficient knowledge to maintain an even flow of conversation during the eight-minute discussion. Support objects were often very helpful in assisting students to develop their answers and sustain the discussion.

Students need to practise what to do when asked a question they do not understand or do not hear clearly. Some students should have asked for clarification by saying: ‘老师, 请您再说一遍, 好吗?’ or ‘老师, (某某词) 是什么意思?’ If assessors ask about an aspect of the topic which is not covered in the student’s Detailed Study, instead of giving a long awkward pause, the student should politely say to the assessors ‘老师, 对不起, 这部分我没学过, 可是我学过...’. Students should analyse all the texts in detail, and should be prepared to answer any question based on the texts they have studied. Students cannot assume that assessors will only ask them the questions they have practised at school and are expecting. In addition, students should be able to elaborate on their own ideas and opinions, demonstrating a sophisticated level of content.

Pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo are also assessed in the communication section. Strong students maintained a smooth conversational flow. Some students’ pronunciation was good, but their intonation could have been improved. Students who did well used accurate vocabulary, expressed themselves clearly and used a wide range of sentence structures. Some students were too soft in their vocal delivery and avoided eye contact with assessors.

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

Strong students demonstrated excellent knowledge of their topic. Most students were able to follow the flow of the discussion, keep their answers relevant, provide a range of information and ideas on the topic and support their opinions with good examples. The less successful students were often restricted by the topic selected. Some topics did not enable students to go further than merely describing events or situations. In other cases, the topic selected may have been suitable yet the student was not prepared to give opinions. Several students chose topics which were beyond their language capacity. These performances were more like presentations, and students subsequently had difficulty when assessors interrupted their memorised responses with unanticipated questions.

It is very important that students choose the topic for their Detailed Study carefully. As this section is a discussion, a chosen topic needs to have suitable content and issues for the student and assessors to discuss. The topic also needs to suit the student’s language capacity and allow the student to express his/her opinions. Some students covered too many aspects in their Detailed Study and as a result every aspect lacked depth and focus.

# 2010 Assessment Report



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 中国的乒乓球/Chinese Table Tennis, 中国剪纸/Chinese paper cutting, 花木兰/Mulan, 兵马俑/Terracotta and 饺子/Dumplings.

Some students were not clear about the relationship between the topic chosen and the resources used and they failed to clarify, elaborate on and defend their opinions and ideas by using the resources. Some sub-topics were too specific and it was difficult to develop the discussion, while others tended to lead students towards a mini-presentation rather than a discussion. Students should remember that the second part of the oral examination is a discussion and regular interaction is expected. Students need to practise expressing their opinions and extending them beyond the basic level.

Students are reminded that any supporting material they bring should not have Chinese characters or Pinyin on it (apart from a label or a heading). Well-chosen supporting material can provide valuable content, and prompt a stimulating discussion and the expression of worthwhile ideas.

## **Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar**

### **Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar**

Students should be reminded that 15 hours of class time are required for the Detailed Study. Students are expected to prepare and learn the correct grammatical patterns and the key words associated with their chosen topic.

The language used in the Discussion section should be less predictable. There should be many new and unfamiliar words in the resources used by students. They should not only master these words but also practise using them in discussion. There were many occasions when students used unfamiliar words in their introduction but were unable to hear and understand the same words when they were used by the assessors.