



2006

LOTE: Japanese First Language GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination assesses the student's knowledge and skill in using spoken language. It has two sections: a Presentation and a Discussion of a chosen Detailed Study. Each section should last for approximately five minutes (a total of approximately 10 minutes).

The Presentation requires a brief outline of the issue selected (no more than one minute), followed by the Presentation itself (no longer than four minutes). Students may be asked to cease their Presentation after four minutes and 30 seconds. Students may use photographs, diagrams or maps to support their Presentation, and may use a cue card (no more than 20 cm x 12.5 cm) written in point form. Students are requested to show the card to assessors in order to verify the size and writing form.

In the Discussion section, students are asked to discuss aspects of the nominated issue and clarify or elaborate on any points presented. Students are expected to discuss related, broader issues beyond the topics selected.

In general, students this year were well informed of the procedures and requirements of the examination. Most students used their cue card correctly, kept to the time limit of four minutes for the Presentation, and employed an appropriate register during their performances. Most were able to argue the main aspects of their topics within the five-minute Discussion.

The performance levels of students were varied. Some students had prepared thoroughly for the Presentation. They demonstrated a deep knowledge of issues linked to the texts studied, elaborated on opinions and showed excellent presentation skills. These students were also able to discuss their views readily and logically, and gave some possible solutions. It was good to see the improvement in these presentation skills.

On the other hand, some students did not prepare adequately. They did not comprehend key points in the texts, did not deal adequately with information and were not able to demonstrate that they had any in-depth thoughts about the issues. As a result, these students showed insufficient knowledge of issues and had difficulty expressing comprehensive opinions and ideas. Such students were not able to respond appropriately in the Discussion. They gave only basic and superficial responses, or their responses relied only on personal experiences.

Resources

There was a wide variety of resources used. These included novels, autobiographies, non-fiction texts, feature articles of monthly magazines, films, TV dramas, documentaries, newspaper articles and editorials, online resources and statistics.

It was good that many students studied three texts drawn mainly from the field of Literature and the Arts as suggested in the study design. However, this year more students employed resources that lacked sufficient depth, such as simple articles from newspapers and magazines, simple online materials or statistics, which were inadequate as main texts. These resources did not provide enough information to help students explore issues in depth and develop insight into their issues. It is suggested that novels and films which appeal to the reader's emotions and thoughts should be included in the resources. These can describe the social situations related to an issue and are beneficial in promoting an understanding of the feelings and thoughts of others. Using novels and films as resources helps students to develop their own ideas and opinions related to the issues.

Although it is easy to access information through the Internet and some online resources give useful information, they are by no means comprehensive and often do not help develop a student's ability to manage more complex information. Inadequate and inappropriate texts may affect the quality of a student's overall performance, particularly the depth and the breadth of the content of their Presentation and Discussion. It is vital that students choose appropriate materials as main texts in order to support their research and opinions.

Topics

Topics for the Detailed Study were diverse this year. Some interesting topics were 'bullying', 'the changing of Japanese society', and 'changes in Japanese language'. It was pleasing to see that students had a wide range of interests; however, there were some points of concern this year. Some topics hardly contained any social or cultural issues related to Japanese society. In these cases, students struggled to express their opinions and thoughts critically by taking a clear



stance on issues in the Presentation, and could not respond adequately in the Discussion. Moreover, some students chose topics on complex issues in Japanese society which were too difficult for them to handle. Consequently, their understanding of the topics was very limited, which affected their ability to convey key points and discuss their views convincingly.

It is strongly recommended that students seek the advice of their teachers before starting their Detailed Study. Selecting a topic that is difficult to research will disadvantage the student. It is necessary that students understand how to research their topics appropriately during the scheduled class time. The recommended procedure is to select appropriate topics, clarify the issues, seek appropriate resources, read the resources in sufficient depth, evaluate the information and opinions critically and form a well-supported view. Students are encouraged to develop their research skills using both familiar, simple topics as well as more complex ones that reflect Japanese social or cultural issues. It is also good preparation for students to present their findings and views in class and to discuss their results in pairs or groups. This allows students to practise articulating their views, and hear the questions and opinions of others. It is strongly recommended that time be allocated in class to practise both the Presentation and the Discussion.

Finally, it was disappointing that some students did not appear to have adequately grasped the main issues of the texts they used for their Detailed Study. It is desirable that students make a habit of reading books to improve comprehension skills. It is suggested that teachers give a list of recommended books to students and encourage them to read more widely. It is also recommended that teachers allocate time in class for students to read materials or books.

It is generally thought that the Discussion is more difficult than the Presentation. Therefore, it is recommended that more time be allocated in class to preparing for the Discussion.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Presentation

Communication

Most students successfully performed the Presentation within the given time; however, some students' Presentations were too short. This was often due to a lack of preparation or speaking too quickly as a result of nervousness. Some students were asked to discontinue their performances after four and a half minutes because they tried to include too much information. Others hesitated frequently and the time elapsed before they were able to complete their Presentation.

This year, more students showed excellent presentation skills by speaking clearly, emphasising important points with stress and changing tempo, using support materials effectively and maintaining a fluent delivery. Accordingly, they succeeded in engaging the assessors' attention throughout the Presentation.

It is necessary for students to rehearse their Presentation frequently both in and outside class in order to familiarise themselves with procedures and build their confidence. This not only helps to improve presentation skills but also helps to combat the effects of nervousness.

Content

In the successful Presentations, students raised their issues clearly, established conceptual links between resources and highlighted examples supporting their views. They were able to represent their ideas and thoughts comprehensively and analytically.

In poor Presentations, students often merely summarised each text with short comments, gave little information or explained only personal experiences related to their issues. They failed to express a well-supported personal opinion. The content did not focus on their issues and stated only facts. Moreover, the content was limited in range because of problems with comprehending the major points of their resources.

Students should make sure that in the Presentation they explore issues sufficiently by using appropriate texts, evaluating opinions analytically and giving their thoughts and ideas logically and critically. It should be made clear to students that the Presentation is evaluative and not simply informative.



Section 2 – Discussion

Communication

Strong students responded readily and confidently and were able to cope effortlessly with difficulties in this section. They often took the initiative during the discussion because they had prepared thoroughly and understood the issues deeply. On the other hand, weaker students were not able to respond appropriately. They hesitated frequently, and their performances were affected by long pauses. Some students appeared passive during the discussion because of a lack of preparation or insufficient understanding of the topics. Students are encouraged to practise those communication strategies that help them avoid long pauses and cope with difficulties. Practising for the Discussion, including learning how to take the initiative and the use of communication strategies, is recommended to improve skills and confidence.

Content

In good performances, students showed an in-depth knowledge of the issues, explained their thoughts logically and convincingly and gave possible solutions for their issues. However, in poor performances, students presented general and superficial ideas or subjective thoughts that relied only on their limited experiences. They repeated simplistic opinions lifted from the texts or gave confused viewpoints. They were unable to express a logical argument.

The Discussion requires a deep understanding of the issues and an ability to respond to different aspects raised spontaneously by assessors. Students may be asked to explain arguments that are contrary to their own opinions.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

This is the second year since the examination time was reduced to two hours, plus 15 minutes of reading time, and it was observed that students coped reasonably well with the time pressure. The majority of students completed all the three sections and there were few papers in which no attempt has been made to complete either Section 2 or Section 3. This clearly shows that students had practised time management skills prior to the exam.

The listening section was again the most successful section; however, students struggled this year as there were three questions that required paragraph writing. Though most students completed these three paragraphs, they tended to use key expressions with little consideration of the sequence of the argument. Many responses to Section 3 were rushed, which clearly indicated that students spent more time than they had planned during the listening section. This again shows the importance of having effective time-management skills.

In Section 2, students did not seem to understand the purpose of the question. After identifying problems of education from the texts, some students started to write their own opinions on why Japanese students' academic ability was in decline, using their own experience as a reason. Section 2 (Reading and responding) assesses students' knowledge and skill in analysing and synthesising. Students are recommended to practise this style of question more, so they do not mistake it with the style of task required for Section 3.

A large amount of misused kanji, especially ateji (using wrong Kanji that has the same reading), was observed. 温線 (instead of 温泉), 入溶(入浴), 誤樂(娛樂) can be avoided easily if students understand the meaning of each kanji. Considering the two hour examination time, there is no time to check many Kanji in the dictionary during the examination. Students are strongly advised to use *Kyooiku Kanji* in their everyday writing and get used to writing them.

Correct use of *genkooyooshi* was another issue. It has been identified as one of the main problems, and it seems that more and more confusion occurs each year. The positioning of title/name/signing off, indentation for paragraphs and date, position of commas and full stops are the common aspects students need to know when writing on *genkooyooshi*. Teachers are advised to take enough time to explain the correct use of *genkooyooshi* and the specific requirements of various text types.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

As was mentioned in last year's Assessment Report, the length of students' paragraph writing (Question 5) still raises concerns. The majority of students only wrote about 120 ji, which makes it impossible to include all the necessary information in the summary. Students are advised to read the instructions thoroughly and follow them carefully, as 200



ji was suggested to give students a guideline as to how much information was to be included. It is also important to use conjunctions and ending expressions to structure the content in an effective way.

The majority of students wrote several key expressions from the listening text, but did not link them into a concise summary. Conjunctions such as *ので、従って、また* are recommended for active use as well as endings such as 「*以上のように、社会の価値観が変化してきた。*」. Successful students were able to link different elements smoothly, rather than randomly pick up phrases to fill in the lines.

Question 1

18 時間で 3,990 円 (3,990 円だけでなく、18 時間でという情報も必要)

Question 2

電車の女性専用車両 (女性専用電車ではダメ)

Question 3

The following information (four different categories) needed to be included as the service.

使い捨て歯ブラシやタオルなどが使える。
大浴場やサウナに入りたいだけ入ることができる。
休憩室で寝椅子に座ってテレビを見たり、漫画を読んだりできる。
おでんや焼きそば、冷えた麦茶といった食べ物、飲み物を注文することができる。

Question 4

Four points from the following dots needed to be included in the answer. The first point ('Do not have to worry about men's attention') needed to be included.

男性の目を気にしなくてよい。
サウナやお風呂に入りたいだけ入ることができる。
食べる、飲む、入浴する、寝るという生活の基本が満たされる。
テレビ、漫画という娯楽を楽しみたいだけ楽しむことができる。
値段が手ごろ。

Question 5

Students were asked to write a summary of the changes of women's role in approximately 200 ji, including the following points.

男は仕事、女は家庭という固定的な役割分担の意識が薄れつつある。
男性も働く妻に協力し、家庭を重視するようになった。
社会の価値観が変わってきた。
結婚しないで仕事を続ける女性が増えた。
結婚しても子どもを持たない女性が増えた。

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Question 6

The chosen topic was familiar to students and generally they were able to identify the main problems and solutions from Texts 2 and 3. Students were most successful at addressing the second criterion (appropriateness of structure and sequence). The main features of a speech script (title, brief introduction of the topic, structure, content, conclusion and salutation) were demonstrated by many students, which proved that considerable time had been put into learning different text types. Teachers should be congratulated for this.

Some students wrote their response in the same order that points were raised in the reading texts. Even though they successfully selected important points, these responses did not address the first criterion (the capacity to identify and synthesise relevant information and ideas from the texts) to an excellent standard, as they did not synthesise the content. Successful students were able to not only identify key information correctly, but also describe it in well-considered structures with minimal copying of sentences and expressions from the reading texts.

The following are the three problems in education and two solutions for those problems.

問題点：①学力低下……思考力、読解力低下（言葉の喪失）
②学習意欲低下



③教育環境の不備……「総合的学習」に対する教員の多忙感
教員の力量不足

解決案：①習熟度別、少人数クラス

②教育環境の整備（教員補助）……学習内容、指導案、教材作成の補助

Section 3 – Writing in Japanese

Students were asked to choose one of five questions. This year there were three imaginative writing tasks and a large number of students chose to write an imaginative piece. Students are advised to take more time to consider the structure and development of the content. They should not simply write a series of little events happening one after another with little descriptions of emotion or atmosphere. To be considered as having a high standard of relevance, breadth and depth of content (the first criterion in Section 3), there must be a variety of adjectives and adverbs expressing people, places, emotion and atmosphere vividly. Techniques such as varying the sentence length, juxtaposing different sentence lengths or using flashbacks can be used to improve the quality of the climax.

Students failed to gain marks when they did not follow correct text type.

Question 7

This was an imaginative task in which students were asked to write journal entries for two days when their height had increased by 50 centimetres after taking a medicine. This was the most popular topic, perhaps because it appeared easy. However, many pieces just described a series of small happenings from the moment they became 50 centimetres taller and there were little emotions and often no concise ending.

Successful journal entries described the experience of being 50 centimetres taller in an expressive way and connected the fear, joy or shock with the deeper realisation of being satisfied with their original height.

Question 8

In this topic students were required to write a story about a person overcoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). There were some very creative stories which attracted readers' attention with clever story lines. Successful students were able to illustrate a climactic incident with a turning point, including vivid descriptions with careful selection of adjectives or adverbs.

The main character of this story could be a person who overcame NEET; the student themselves, as a friend of NEET; or the story could be written in the third person.

Question 9

This was another popular topic in which students had to write, as a member of the community, to a newspaper to express their opinions and concern on electrical tracing tags attached to children.

Most students successfully discussed both the pros and cons of introducing the tags. Some students were too inclined to protect peoples' privacy and highlighted the unreliability of the police. The main concern was to evaluate the introduction of the tags to protect children's safety, where the pros and cons were well balanced and written from a community member's point of view.

Question 10

Students had to write a letter to the editor about whether NHK (Japanese National Broadcast) should remain or not. As this task could have been interpreted as a persuasive topic, both persuasive and evaluative elements were taken into account. However, students are advised that in Section 3 they are asked to produce **only evaluative** or **imaginative** writing. In an evaluative piece, both the pros and cons need to be described in a balanced fashion.

Question 11

Students had to write a magazine article about an invention to save the environment. This was the least popular task and there were no exemplary pieces.