

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 8281/01 Speaking</p>

Key messages

- Candidates generally made a good effort to use a range of grammatical structures.
- The vast majority of candidates had prepared their presentations well, demonstrated by factual knowledge about Japanese society and the use of a range of more difficult vocabulary.
- Candidates should continue to work on their overall intonation of sentences.
- Candidates need more practice in asking questions which arise naturally as part of the conversation.
- Candidates need to be aware that using difficult kanji compound words does not necessarily make their speech sound more impressive, particularly if these words are also mispronounced and difficult for the listener to catch. Candidates should be encouraged to speak in a way that it is easy for the listener to hear and catch.

General comments

Candidates have clearly been able to continue practicing their speaking skills albeit online with teachers and friends, and they are to be commended for this effort. A significant number talked about their conversation partners and what they had found out from them. Where candidates are learning their Japanese from online sources such as videos, they need to be aware that the language varies a great deal between formal and informal depending on context and people, and they should not just copy a phrase they have heard and use it themselves without making sure that it is appropriate in the new context.

Candidates should, however, be encouraged to ask questions more naturally as part of conversations, and be given opportunities to practice this skill. There was a noticeable increase in the orals in which candidates had failed to ask any questions as part of the dialogue and the teacher prompted at the end 'Do you have any questions for me?' – in some case with the candidate answering 'No, I don't.'

Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the culture of Japan, and were often keen to share their own discoveries and perspectives. They usually had an extremely good range vocabulary on these topics of personal interest. Most candidates were able to use a wide range of grammatical structures correctly.

Overall, candidates continue to give the impression that the development of their speaking skills is going well. Most candidates had plenty to say and seemed to be engaged and interested in the conversation with their teacher.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

The vast majority of presentations were well planned and interesting. Some candidates could have elaborated more or added more personal perspectives, but overall candidates seemed to be in good control of the material they had prepared. The delivery was generally fluent and confident. Please do keep on encouraging candidates to choose a Japan related topic that is of personal interest, so that they are motivated to find out as much as they can in preparation for the presentation.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates were well prepared for this section and were able to engage with the examiner in conversation. Sometimes the answers they gave were on the short side, and it would have been better had the candidate had more material prepared. Sometimes candidates seemed surprised if the teacher disagreed with their perspective, or raised facts which pointed in a contrary direction to what they had

presented. Candidates should be reminded that it is always worth asking themselves (during the preparation stage) if there is another perspective, or what the opposing perspectives to their own are and how to counter those. Candidates should aim to engage in discussion with the teacher, and not just simply repeatedly state their own opinions.

Section 3: General Conversation

Most candidates engaged well with the examiner, although for some candidates there was a marked difference in performance depending on the topic. Candidates should practice speaking about all the various topics on the syllabus. Please encourage candidates to always say more, always engage the examiner in discussion, and to ask questions as a natural part of the dialogue. The vast majority of candidates had excellent 'repair' strategies such as asking for clarification.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** choose the word (or words) from the options given with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;
- **Question 2:** make a sentence which includes the grammatical structure given in the question; this should be a sentence created by the candidate and not copied from the text;
- **Question 3 and Question 4:** candidates should formulate the answers in their own words and refrain from copying from the text;
- **Question 5:** write within the word limit. In part **(b)** candidates should express their own ideas rather than repeating ideas from the two texts;
- **Language:** when preparing for the examination, revise the basic grammar, structures and kanji list.

General comments

Despite another challenging year, candidates and teachers should be congratulated on their achievements.

It is very important that candidates read the passages thoroughly, to understand what each question is asking for and respond appropriately.

It is very important for candidates to manage their time to make sure they can attempt all questions including the writing task at the end.

Many candidates used kanji for AS level and some of them wrote very well. There were still some who used a lot of hiragana, and candidates should be reminded to use kanji where it is appropriate in their writing. There were instances of spelling errors with katakana among candidates.

In order to get high mark bands for the Quality of Language, examiners need to see examples of language that has been generated by the candidate. Most candidates were aware that they should not copy large sections of language directly from the text and should use their own words.

Candidates should ensure their answers are written as neatly as possible as it was difficult to read some answers.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

The purpose of this exercise is to identify the meaning of 5 items of vocabulary from the text. Very few candidates received full marks, although the majority of candidates managed to receive 3–4 marks this year again. Most candidates attempted all questions.

Question 2

The majority of candidates were able to produce a grammatically correct sentence for each structure; many were also able to use a good number of kanji and most received 3–4 marks. Weaker candidates used the same verb from the passage in their answers and as a result, no mark was given. Candidates must focus on writing a sentence using appropriate grammar for these exercises.

It is very important to read the instructions carefully and make candidates aware they should not copy the same or very similar sentences from the passages.

Candidates are advised to keep their answers short in this question. Candidates must read the passage carefully taking note of where the structure comes from so that they understand and replicate the correct usage. A mark cannot be given if the structure does not meet the required grammar even if the right formation verb is used. The meaning of the sentence produced must make sense in Japanese, it is not enough just for the sentence to be grammatically correct. Candidates should check their answers carefully to avoid spelling mistakes, such as hard sounds or kanji with the same reading but different meaning.

Some candidates had clearly prepared well for this exercise and performed very well showing their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Both polite form and plain form writing are accepted in this question.

- (i) e.g. 漢字が書けます。(potential)
Many candidates managed to produce a good sentence for this exercise using the grammar correctly. Misspelling potentials without ら is a common but acceptable mistake. The most common mistake was using ほめられる.
- (ii) e.g. ケーキを食べてしまいます。
This question was answered quite well among candidates. Weaker candidates either wrote unclear sentences or made a mistake forming te-form such as 私が財布を遺してしまいました。 There were also a few candidates who tried to use te-form for adjectives for instance, 寒いてしまいます.
- (iii) e.g. わたしは父にくつを買ってもらいました。
This question was answered very well among candidates as many of them clearly understood how to produce a sentence using the required grammar and they succeeded in writing various interesting sentences. Some candidates made mistakes such as ケーキをもらいました。/母に本を買ってまらいました。/この宿題は思ってもらう物です.
- (iv) e.g. しごとが終わったら帰っていいです。
Many candidates succeeded in producing a good sentence using this grammar appropriately using verb (ta-form), adjectives and also nouns. Weaker candidates did not use past tense, such as 天気はいいたら/学校に来だったら/終わったら and so on. There were a very few candidates who wrote their response using ~たり~たり which could have been avoided with careful reading of the question or checking their answer.
- (v) e.g. 日本語だけでなく英語も話します。
For this question, many candidates wrote sentences like 女だけではなく男も化粧しています, which was interesting. As a result, many candidates gained 1 mark. The candidates who did not manage to gain 1 mark wrote a meaningless sentence even though it was grammatically correct such as 新聞だけではなく明日も雨が降ります.

Question 3

In **Question 3** and **4**, candidates needed to show clear evidence of understanding: it is expected that candidates will rephrase the passage to express their answers in their own words and not lifted from the passages directly. The majority of candidates responded very well, and most answers were well presented this year. Weaker candidates tended to rely heavily on lifting language unchanged from the passages, which does not always show genuine understanding..

It is not necessary for candidates to use the polite form in their answers. However, kanji should be used and written correctly. It is not essential to use any kanji from outside the syllabus.

- (a) Most candidates managed to respond to this question very well and received 2 marks. Weaker candidates mentioned 小さい町 in their answers, which was not accepted. All the candidates need to focus on what the exercise is asking for and respond appropriately.
- (b) Most candidates managed to respond to this question very well and received 1–2 marks successfully. They should not copy their answers directly from the passage and mentioning 地元の名物を楽しむ/見学する was not accepted.
- (c) Many candidates succeeded in responding to this question well. A few candidates rephrased 地球の中, which was accepted. 燃やしたり/うめたり was given 1 mark each, even if it was mentioned in the same sentence.
- (d) Many candidates attempted this exercise and achieved 1–2 marks successfully. There were other answers accepted such as 収集車がない/ポスターやイラストを使ってごみの分けかたについて説明している. Answers like ゴミステーションがある/ごみの分け方がわかりやすい were not accepted and therefore no marks were given.
- (e) Many candidates received 1–2 marks for this question, although most candidates tried hard to respond to this exercise. Weaker candidates wrote answers referring only to what people can buy without any explanation. Candidates were given marks if they gave answers such as 中古品/セカンドハンドの物/古着/リサイクル品.
- (f) This exercise was the most challenging for candidates as it required them to rephrase the words of the text and not many candidates managed this successfully. Weaker candidates included 会社にアピールする in their answer. Some candidates also mentioned points such as 買い物のときにちょっと考える/消費者としての力を利用してアピールする, and so on. Stronger candidates seemed to have clear ideas about what to say and managed to produce very good answers.

Passage Two

Question 4

Many candidates were able to respond to all of the questions and answered well in their own words. A few candidates did not respond to some questions or were not able to respond to the questions properly.

It is essential that candidates read the passage thoroughly and then read each question carefully in order to score appropriately. Candidates must rephrase their answers as much as possible rather than lift their answers from the passage directly because if they do this, they cannot be awarded fully for the Quality of Language. It is strongly recommended for all candidates to check their answers carefully as a high frequency of spelling mistakes was noticeable this year.

- (a) Candidates generally managed to respond to this first question and most of them received 1 mark.
- (b) Most candidates performed well in this question and many managed to gain full marks or three marks. Weaker candidates mentioned 運動会/休み時間 or just gave their own ideas.
- (c) Most candidates received at least 1 mark for this question. Some candidates could not clearly write who does what and therefore the information was not clear. It was evident that some candidates were not sure how to structure Japanese sentences using appropriate particles.
- (d) The majority of candidates could answer this correctly. Some found it difficult to locate 子どものこえにイライラする人が出ている and they wrote ストレスが多い in their answers. As a result, many candidates received 1–2 marks for this question. Some candidates managed to rephrase answers well, such as 不機嫌 for イライラする.
- (e) This question was answered well by many candidates and most of them managed to score 2 marks. Weaker candidates lifted their answers directly from the passage instead of using their own words, including details which invalidated their answer.

- (f) Many candidates tried to respond to this question and there were some great answers. Weaker responses were very brief, writing 健康に影響が出る/環境に良くない/環境の問題につながる. There were a lot of simple answers which needed more thorough explanation.

Question 5

Overall, most candidates performed well. Weaker candidates sometimes did not manage to answer **Question 5(b)**.

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Candidates need to be aware that they must provide 10 distinct points from both passages according to the question asked for **part (a)** and talk about their opinions or ideas in **part (b)**, all within the word limit of 280 characters. Some candidates used up all the character space answering part **(a)** and did not respond to **(b)**.

Candidates should be reminded to follow the word limit and should learn how to use 原稿用紙. It was unnecessary for candidates to write vertically. Candidates should endeavour to write clearly and neatly so that all answers are legible.

- (a) The majority of candidates managed to extract the factual points about what individuals and society can do in order to reduce pollution. Most elements were picked up from **Passage One**. Weaker responses were characterised by essays focussing on personal experience or examples from outside the passages. Candidates should be reminded that part (a) is a summary task, and so all points must be drawn from the passages.
- (b) This year many candidates relied heavily upon the reading passages for this part, whereas the focus of part (b) is a personal response where candidates are expected to bring in their own ideas. Stronger candidates managed to express their ideas and explained them very well using appropriate AS level grammar.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high level to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it challenging to structure their ideas grammatically and to communicate in their own words in written Japanese at the level. There were mistakes with particles, and this caused difficulty in understanding what candidates were trying to say, or it changed the meaning of the sentence from what they wanted to say. Candidates should pay attention to the polite form and the plain form as sometime these were mixed in sentences.

Candidates should aim to use kanji from the defined content in order to show their kanji skills rather than just using hiragana. Stronger candidates used a variety of kanji words in their writing beautifully. Generally speaking, candidates succeeded in producing a well-structured essay in this question.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03
Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well, candidates should

- Continue to write using a range of grammar, kanji and vocabulary. Candidates seemed conscious of the need to do this and made a good effort to do so: please continue to encourage this.
- Structure their writing in clear and logical paragraphs.
- Reach a clear conclusion which answers the question posed in the examination paper.
- Make sure that they address the question posed, and not just the general topic area. If they use material that they have prepared, they should make sure that this is used in a relevant way to support the specific points they are making, and not just 'put down' in their answer because they had a specific piece of knowledge or language they wanted to use.
- Continue to learn the correct conventions for writing on 原稿用紙.

General comments

There were very few candidates who took the examination this year, as most candidates in Hong Kong were unable to sit the paper due to a typhoon.

It was obvious that candidates had been well prepared for the examination, and there was clear evidence that they were making a huge effort to include vocabulary, kanji and grammar that they had been taught. The amount of kanji used varied hugely with the individual: please encourage all candidates to have a systematic programme for learning to write kanji in place, in preparation for the examination.

Candidates were generally able to produce a well-structured and thought through piece, for which they are to be commended. Most candidates gave sufficient details and examples to support the points they were making.

Although there are no marks specifically for how they write on 原稿用紙, please continue to teach its use to candidates – including conventions for small letters.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 日常生活

This was a very popular question, with many candidates engaging with it using their own experience. Opinion was split as to whether teenagers studying late into the night was a good thing or a bad thing. Candidates were generally able to state their own opinion, and then support it with two or three different reasons. Most of them were able to state their points objectively, even when they were using their personal experience to illustrate the point, which was very good.

Question 2 食べ物と飲み物

This question was also popular; again with responses both on the 'for' side and the 'against' side. Some candidates used their creativity to imagine what kind of nutritious and tasty food might be available in the future and to describe the experience of eating what was provided and never cooking.

With the very small number of candidates who took this paper, insufficient candidates answered **Questions 3, 4 or 5** to make general comments worthwhile.