2022 VCE Chinese Second Language oral external assessment report

General comments

Students were assessed on their knowledge and skills in using spoken language. The examination had two sections: a conversation of approximately seven minutes and a discussion of approximately eight minutes.

In both sections, students were assessed in:

* content and communication (relevance, depth and range of information, ideas and opinions; capacity to elaborate and reflect on information, ideas and opinions; capacity to interact with assessors; and effective communication)
* language (appropriateness of vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures; and clarity of expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo).

The majority of students demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of the oral examination and an adequate preparation. Some had prepared thoroughly and this was evident in their conversation and discussion with assessors. These students not only displayed a very high level of fluency and accuracy in Chinese, but also paid attention to the relevance and depth of the information and opinions in their interaction with the assessors. They were active in the exchange and took effective communication measures, including non-verbal communication strategies, to illustrate their experience and their knowledge in the authentic language (real-life expressions). They spoke expressively and had very good control of their tempo.

Common areas for improvement include the following:

* use of correct sentence patterns: some students used English sentence structures when they spoke. For example, descriptive sentences in Chinese should be subject + (adverbs) + adjective, however, some students used the English sentence pattern, subject + be + adjective. Another typical example is when we talk about where an action takes place, the Chinese structure is subject + 在（in，at） + place + verb, but some students used subject + verb + 在（in，at）+ place
* use of fillers in oral expression. It is natural that we use fillers when we speak, however, some students used them far too often, such as 然后 （then） 、这样（so） and 的 （this is not actually a filler, but some students used it at the end of most of their sentences）
* non-verbal communication strategies: tempo, tone and body language should be used appropriately to convey meaning
* mini-presentation: some students over prepared for both sections and tended to present chunks of information or opinions in one go. They sounded very fluent, but the content delivered may not have always been relevant to the questions asked by assessors.

Specific information

Section 1 – Conversation

This section was a general conversation between the student and the two assessors about the student’s personal world and their interactions with the Chinese language and culture as learners. Students were able to support their personal reflections by referring to any of the relevant subtopics studied in class from the prescribed theme ‘The individual’ and the prescribed theme ‘The Chinese-speaking communities’.

Students who engaged in higher-scoring conversations:

* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily and communicating confidently
* carried the conversation forward with spontaneity
* provided an excellent range of information, ideas and opinions clearly and logically with highly relevant responses
* clarified, elaborated on and defended information, ideas and opinions very effectively
* used sophisticated vocabulary and structures accurately and appropriately
* used language naturally
* used excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

The students demonstrated their readiness to respond effectively to most questions relating to their personal world and their interaction with the Chinese language and culture. Most were able to speak fluently and confidently in this section. In the conversation, they really appreciated the learning opportunities provided by their teachers and schools. They valued the learning experiences, as they showed genuine interest in the learning.

Content and communication

Students handled basic questions about their families, school life, hobbies and future aspirations very well. They were also very confident in telling assessors why they learned Chinese and what their learning experiences were like. Many of them were able to elaborate on their responses with specific information and relevant examples. They also defended their point of view with good persuasion and reasoning skills.

The students’ performances highlighted the need to address the following:

* students must know that assessors may ask them to clarify or elaborate on their responses. They may also be challenged with questions that require deeper thinking skills, especially when they demonstrate a good control of the language. For example, if a student said, 我希望我们一家人可以享尽天伦之乐 （I hope our family can enjoy family happiness; 天伦之乐 is an idiom）， assessors may ask 请你举个例子说说你说的天伦之乐（Can you provide us with an example of ‘family happiness’ mentioned?）. Another example would be if a student told the assessors that they celebrated Chinese New Year with their family and their parents gave them a lucky red packet 红包 this year, the assessors may ask 为什么爸爸妈妈给你红包？ (Why did your parents give you the lucky red packet?).
* relevance of content: when elaborating on the information provided, students need to think carefully and respond specifically to what the question is asking. For example, when asked about their age, some students spoke about their personalities, why their friends liked them and what their family was like. Assessors had to politely interrupt them and redirect them to other relevant questions.

Language

In spite of some errors in pronunciation and expression, students in general were familiar with the relevant essential vocabulary required for the oral examination and were able to apply the grammar knowledge outlined in the study design. Many students incorporated the use of idioms and idiomatic sayings in their conversations, showing complexity of expression. However, the following is worth noting:

* some students tended to use too many idioms and in some cases, these idioms were not appropriate for the context and their expression sounded unnatural. A typical example is 从小学到高中，我心怀坦荡，有话直说，不虚情假意的特点，总能让我和同学们打成一片，因此人缘很好。而且，无论什么话题，我都能做到侃侃而谈。(Five idioms are used in these two sentences. The meaning can be translated to ‘From primary school to high school, I have been magnanimous, straightforward and sincere, which always allowed me to get along with my classmates, so I was very popular. And, no matter what the topic, I can talk eloquently’)
* sometimes, due to the lack of understanding of the idioms, students did not get them right when they used them. For example, 超凡脱俗 (meaning ‘reach a level of elegance like no common people’) became 超俗脱凡 (incorrect word order) and 因材施教 (meaning ‘teach students in accordance with their aptitude’) became 因教施才(incorrect word order)
* mispronunciation of words that leads to a change of meaning, such as:
* 成凤 （chéngfèng, to become a phoenix / successful) was pronounced 成分 (chéngfén, ingredients)
* 摄影（shèyǐng) was pronounced as sèyǐng
* inaccurate expression: Some students translated expressions from English to Chinese, which does not always work. For example, many students said 我做经济学、汉语、英语 … (‘I did Economics, Chinese, English …’). In Chinese, the accurate way to say it is 我学经济学、汉语、英语 … (‘I study Economics, Chinese, English…’). Some other examples are:
* 打运动 (play sport; in Chinese, it should be 做运动)
* 下一天 (next day; in Chinese， it should be 第二天)
* 我们打网球和朋友一起 (We play tennis with friends; in Chinese, it should be 我们和朋友一起打网球).

Section 2 – Discussion

Students discussed their chosen subtopic and their supporting visual material, which had to be related to either the prescribed theme of ‘The Chinese-speaking communities’ or the prescribed theme of ‘The world around us’. The focus of the discussion was on exploring aspects of the subtopic, including information, opinions and ideas. Students were expected to respond to questions on their subtopic and supporting visual material.

Students who engaged in higher-scoring discussions:

* provided an excellent range and depth of information, ideas and opinions with an original perspective on the subtopic
* elaborated on complex information and defended ideas and opinions clearly and logically with highly relevant responses
* used the image skilfully to support the discussion on the subtopic
* communicated information, ideas and opinions very confidently and carried the discussion forward with spontaneity.

Overall, most students displayed a good understanding of the requirements of the discussion outlined in the study design and the oral examination specifications. Many of them presented subtopics that they were interested in and that had enough breadth and depth for the discussion to take place effectively. Some students were even able to talk about certain aspects of Chinese culture embedded in the subtopics. They made good use of the images they brought in to stimulate and support the discussion.

Content and communication

Students showed that they researched various aspects of the chosen subtopics. They were able to present relevant factual information and opinions in the discussion that related to what, who, when, where, how and why.

Some students showed a passion for the subtopics chosen and delivered the relevant information and opinions with expression. Assessors engaged in a lively and thoughtful discussion with them. These students illustrated their understanding of their chosen subtopic and presented detailed information and explanation. They spontaneously used the knowledge they gained from their research and moved the discussion forward with confidence.

Examples of some the subtopics were: Chinese New Year, Painting of Five Horses, Lin Qiaozhi, famous dishes in Hunan, bronze mirrors, electrical cars, and the movie *Hello, Li Huanying!*.

The areas that need improvement are:

* choice of mage: some images brought in did not match the subtopics, some were too small (smaller than A4), some had words on them that could be used as hints and some were collages of more than one image. Teachers should read the oral examination specifications about the image and how it should be used. Students should know and appreciate the content of the image well, should hold it up when they refer to it and point to the specific parts if needed
* the subtopic: while most students chose subtopics suitable to their language competencies, some students’ subtopics were clearly too difficult for them and their understanding and delivery of the content was affected. The range of vocabulary and grammar knowledge should be considered when making decisions about the subtopics. A lack of understanding and appreciation of the subtopics limits the students’ responses to the questions.

It is important that students indicate clearly what their subtopics are. Students should understand that assessors can ask them questions related to different aspects of the subtopics.

Language

Most students learned the key vocabulary and phrases relating to their subtopics and were able to use them accurately in their responses. Those who performed really well in this section were able to use the special terminologies and quotes from their resources appropriately. In addition, their language showed a great variety and flowed fluently in the appropriate contexts.

In preparation for the discussion, students should practise how to deliver the content with appropriate tempo and volume and to avoid using a monotone. When students speak too fast, it is not easy for assessors to understand all of the information presented in order to ask appropriate questions.

More information

Refer to the [VCE Chinese Second Language study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/chinese-secondlanguage/Pages/Index.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-ashttps%3A/www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Chinese-Second-Language.aspxsessment/past-examinations/Pages/Languages-index.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.