2023 VCE Chinese Second Language oral external assessment report

Refer to the relevant [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Languages-index.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.

Section 1: Conversation

What students did well

In 2023 students:

* engaged in a general conversation about their personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. The majority of students interacted well with the assessors, talking about the different aspects of their personal world, often giving very good examples to illustrate what they said. For instance, when talking about what they did at home, some students said that they taught their parents Chinese pictograms and idioms they learned, and some of them talked about the trips they did with their parents.
* provided a range of relevant information, ideas and opinions with an appropriate depth. For example, when talking about their families, some students were able to talk about what role each family member took at home, how they spent their weekends together, and what they thought constituted a happy family.
* elaborated on, clarified and defended ideas and opinions by providing examples to illustrate what they said; for instance, giving examples of why they loved their school, such as it has a wide range of facilities, modern buildings with advanced ICT equipment and a sports complex, very professional teachers and highly motivated students. When explaining why Chinese is a very difficult language, some students gave as examples the difficulty in pronouncing the tones and the confusion of words that sound the same but are spelled and defined differently, such as 鱼(yú) and 余 (yú).
* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily, communicating confidently and carrying the conversation forward with spontaneity. Those who communicated confidently used a natural manner of speaking, appropriate and engaging tones to show contextual emotions, steady tempo and good eye contact. Those who carried the conversation forward with spontaneity usually left ‘openings’ for the assessors. For example, they would say: ‘I participate in all sorts of extra-curricular activities and I enjoy them. Debating, drama and sports etc. are all very interesting, but what I like most is drama.’
* responded confidently and were able to advance the conversation, including use appropriate repair strategies when needed. Some students used tactful repair strategies, such as 對不起，我的意思是…'，'對不起，我錯了。我應該說…'，'對不起。之前我也不是很清楚。我想說的是... (‘Sorry, what I meant is …’, ‘sorry, I was wrong. I should say…’, ‘sorry. I was not very clear before. What I want to say is …’)
* used appropriate vocabulary. The majority of students were very familiar with the vocabulary commonly required to talk about their personal world and were able to use it confidently and accurately.
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures. Most of the students used the grammar and sentence structures outlined in the study design very well. The following are some examples used frequently by the students:
* 虽然……但是…… （although…but…）as in 虽然学汉语不容易，但是我还是学得很带劲 (Although it is not easy to learn Chinese, I learn it enthusiastically)
* time expressions indicating time duration, as in 我学汉语五年了(I have learned Chinese for five years)
* 对……感兴趣 （to be interested in…） as in 我对流行音乐特别感兴趣 (I am especially interested in pop music)
* students that performed well used more complex grammar. For example, 從小，我的心裡就種下了當老師的種子。現在種子發芽了。我將在大學從事教育工作，並成為一名教師。
* ‘Ever since I was little, the seed of becoming a teacher was sowed in my heart. Now the seed sprouts. I am going to do Education at the university and I will be a teacher’
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Those who scored highly often spoke with good pronunciation, intonation, tempo and stress, displaying a good control of the rising and falling patterns in the tone and rhythmic flow of their expression to convey emotion, emphasis and other nuances in communication. In Chinese, they used抑扬顿挫 (cadence) appropriately.
* the majority of students were well prepared for Section 1. Many of them not only had no difficulty in understanding questions, but were also able to use more sophisticated vocabulary and expression, such as 促膝谈心 (to have a heart-to-heart talk), 勇于拼搏（dare to fight and challenge oneself) and 衣来伸手，饭来张口 (When clothes come, one holds out one’s hands; when food arrives, one opens one’s mouth).

Areas for improvement

Students should:

* ensure adequate preparation for the conversation with relevance, depth and a range of information, ideas and opinions. Students need to practice ways to provide assessors with more relevant information. For example, when asked ‘How many people are there in your family?’, apart from saying how many people they have in their families, they could also tell the assessors who their family members are
* practise answering a range of questions to be able to advance the conversation. Responses that did not score well displayed difficulty in understanding the assessors’ questions. Students either provided the assessors with simple brief responses or could not respond at all. It is suggested that students be provided with a lot of practice on the questions directly related to different aspects of their personal world, e.g. 在家里，你和谁最合得来 (At home, who do you get along with the best?)
* build confidence through practising interactions in the language. Quite a few students were nervous. They did not make much eye contact with the assessors and frequently stumbled through their sentences
* practise using more complex sentence structures and syntax. Lower-scoring students often used the simple sentence pattern, subject + verb + object. Their responses were brief and were sometimes not directly related to the questions. They might have understood one or two words of a question and responded without fully understanding the entire question
* practise using repair strategies to advance the conversation when needed. Students are encouraged to practice using strategies to clarify questions, further explain what they intend to say and make self- corrections
* revise grammar. Some very typical errors were:
* the descriptive sentence pattern. Students followed the English sentence pattern, saying things like 我的朋友是高 (My friend is tall) instead of the correct sentence 我的朋友高 (literally, ‘My friend tall’)
* the positions of the adverbial phrases to indicate when and where something takes place. In Chinese, these phrases go before the verbs or at the start of sentences. However, students put them at the end of the sentences as done in English. For example, 我打工在麦当劳 (I work in McDonald’s) instead of the correct sentence 我在麦当劳打工 (literally, ‘I in McDonald’s work’)
* using adverbs such as 非常 (extremely) and 很 (very) together, e.g. 我的老师非常很棒 (My teacher is extremely very good)
* the use of measure words. Students often said ‘打一个工’ (meaning ‘to have a job’; the correct measure word should be ‘份’) and 看一个电影 (meaning ‘watch a movie’; the correct measure word should be 部).
* build vocabulary specific to the student’s personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners
* Some lower-scoring students repeatedly used basic vocabulary related to their family life and school life and relied on what appeared to be pre-learned sentences. When they came across things that they did not know they frequently used 什么的 (whatever), 东西 (things) and事情 (matters)
* Some students tended to do word-for-word translation from English to Chinese. For example, in English we say ‘play sport’, ‘play games’, ‘play the piano’, ‘play the flute’, and ‘play the violin’. In Chinese, each of the words used for ‘play’ in these sentences has a different verb and it can’t be just 玩 (wán, ‘play’, as ‘have fun’).
* practise pronunciation. intonation, stress and tempo. The sounds of ‘c’ and ‘ch’, ‘s’ and ‘sh’, ‘r’ and ‘y’ deserve attention. For example, in the sentence 我去北京的时候，很热 (When I went to Beijing it was very hot), the correct pronunciation of 热is rè, meaning ‘hot’. When it is not pronounced properly, it becomes ‘yè, meaning ‘late at night’. Another example is, ‘我试(shì)了’ and ‘我死（sǐ）了’ (meaning ‘I have tried’ and ‘I am dead’). Chinese is a tonal language. Some students used a very flat tone throughout the exam and did not show the cadence
* avoid relying on Chinese idioms in their responses if they cannot further explain what they said
* prepare for questions being asked in different ways. For example, both你几岁？ and 你多大了？ ask ‘how old are you?’. Students should familiarise themselves with the question words and practise responding to the basic questions related to their personal world. They should also learn to ask for clarification and to indicate to assessors what they know.

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In 2023 students:

* clearly introduced the focus of their subtopic, alerting assessors to the image brought to support the discussion of the subtopic. Most of the students were able to indicate the subtopic to their assessors. Higher-scoring students also related to their assessors what they had learned about the chosen subtopic. In their responses to questions, they were able to summarise the key knowledge well without doing mini presentations. They usually led the discussion and used their image appropriately to illustrate what they said.
* demonstrated in-depth knowledge of their subtopic, from either the prescribed theme ‘The Chinese-speaking communities’ or the prescribed theme ‘The world around us’. Higher-scoring students were able to respond to questions confidently and fluently. For example, when discussing an ancient novel, they might have talked about the author, the plots, the time when the story was written and the context, as well as expanded on traditional Chinese culture and Chinese thinking embedded in the story. On the subtopic of 风筝 (kites), some students did thorough research and demonstrated their understanding by talking fluently about how kites were invented, the different styles and patterns, the functions, the handicraft and the cultural significance etc., as well as their own experience making and flying kites.
* used the image skilfully to support the discussion on the subtopic. It was noted that some students made very good use of their image to indicate to their assessors what they knew about their subtopic. For example, if their subtopic was about celebrating Chinese New Year, their image might have shown a number of the important celebratory activities. The image served as a prompt, and assessors could point to the image when students experienced difficulty in understanding what the assessors asked.
* engaged in a discussion using relevant information, ideas and opinions.
* clarified, elaborated on and defended opinions and ideas. When discussing environment issues, students did really well in clarifying what caused the problems and what they think the governments should do to resolve the issues. They also talked about what they think they could contribute to the resolutions as individuals.
* communicated effectively with assessors throughout the discussion, including using appropriate repair strategies.
* used appropriate vocabulary.
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures.
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Areas for improvement

Students should:

* choose an appropriate subtopic to suit ability and interests and an image that supports discussion about the selected subtopic. Some lower-scoring students chose topics that required them to learn a lot of new words, new expression and cultural knowledge, such as topics relating to Chinese history and Chinese art and craft. Within a limited timeframe, it was very hard for them to take in what the learning materials presented and then apply their knowledge to respond to questions
* prepare a wide range and depth of information, ideas and opinions with an original perspective on the subtopic. Some students showed some good understanding of the chosen subtopic, but they were not able to go deeper to further explain the relationship between the subtopic and the Chinese culture embedded in it. For example, some students chose to talk about famous historical buildings such as 故宫 (Forbidden City) and they were able to exchange information on where the building is, when the building was built, who built it, how it was built, why it was built etc. However, they were not prepared to express a point of view or opinion and talk about the cultural significance of the building and why the building is famous
* use the image to support the discussion on the subtopic. Quite a few students brought an image but did not know how to use it to support the discussion effectively. Assessors had to ask them specifically about the image to draw their attention to it
* some students chose very simple images, sometimes of one item only, which did not provide much content that could be used to support the discussion
* avoid relying on what may appear as pre-learned responses if they cannot address further questions from assessors with spontaneity
* practise using repair strategies
* build vocabulary specific to the selected subtopic
* practise describing the relevance of the image to the subtopic. Students need to be alerted to the examination specifications in relation to the visual materials brought in. They should be familiar with what their images present. For example, if their chosen subtopic is about an animal about to go extinct, they should prepare to talk about how to protect them and how to enable them to reproduce more.
* practise pronunciation, intonation and stress and tempo. Some students chose subtopics that required a large amount of vocabulary, well beyond the expected. They must practise how to pronounce the key vocabulary clearly to avoid presenting misleading or incorrect information, for example, 清朝（qīngcháo, Qing Dynasty） and 秦朝（qíncháo, Qin Dynasty）; 饺子（jiǎozi, dumplings）and 教子 （jiàozǐ, godson）. Some students, especially those who are capable and able, spoke very fast and assessors could not hear clearly the information or opinions presented. The students need to practise how to use the intonation and stress to alert assessors to the key words
* choose subtopics carefully. Subtopics should not be too broad for a 7–8-minute discussion
* understand that assessors may discuss relevant aspects of the chosen subtopic, including information, opinions and ideas.