2023 VCE Chinese Second Language written external assessment report

General comments

The 2023 VCE Chinese Second Language written examination assessed the students’ Chinese language skills in listening, reading and writing. The topics covered a range of subjects such as family, school, festivals, smart houses and famous people, as prescribed in the study design. Students were assessed on their ability to understand spoken and written Chinese as well as their capacity to convey general and specific meanings in English or Chinese writing as required.

Many students demonstrated a high level of listening comprehension skills, but seemed to have difficulty in interpreting the meaning, particularly when responding in Chinese. In Section 2, Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English, students who scored highly demonstrated excellent reading, viewing and listening comprehension skills, while mid-range responses typically missed some specific aspects of the texts when required to summarise information. A small number of low-scoring responses displayed very limited skills in both listening and reading. In Section 2, Part B – Reading and responding in Chinese, mid-range responses tended to rely on the stimulus text whereas high-scoring responses conveyed original meaning clearly with little reliance on the language from the stimulus text.

In Section 3 – Writing in Chinese, most students were able to convey relevant information and ideas throughout their responses and demonstrate understanding of the required writing styles and text types. Lower-scoring responses provided only some relevant information, inconsistent structuring and sequencing of information and insufficient features of the required writing style and text type. Some students did not read the topic carefully enough so that the information they supplied was not relevant or significant to the topic. Some also needed to take care with character writing. Nearly all students had various inaccuracies in their handwriting, particularly the misuse of homophones.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1

Part A – Listening and responding in English

This section assessed the students’ capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts. Students should take every opportunity to practise listening to Chinese texts in order to interpret information accurately into English. When answering comprehension questions in English, it is important to focus on meaning and select the information that is most relevant to the questions asked. Students should also learn to infer meaning contextually to get the right answer. For example, in Question 1c., many students missed that ‘Dalong has a good relationship with his siblings’ in their response because Dalong didn’t say it himself, but only agreed to Lili’s suggestion by saying 我怎么把他们忘了呢？(‘How did I forget them?’).

Question 1a.

Dalong is tired because (all of the following):

* Dalong leaves home very early for work and comes home very late every day.
* He needs to look after his child at night when his wife goes to sleep.
* He needs to help his wife do household chores.
* In the past few weeks, he has been redoing the garden.

A small number of students missed translating the phrase 重新做花园 (‘redo the garden’).

Question 1b.

Dalong is concerned that it is too expensive and that it is difficult to find somebody to help immediately.

Question 1c.

* Dalong is going to ask his elder brother to help with gardening and his elder sister to help with household chores.
* His elder brother loves gardening.
* He will ask his elder sister to help with household chores because his sister doesn’t live far.
* Dalong has a good relationship with his siblings.

Low-scoring responses included fragmented or misinterpreted phrases such as ‘Take kids to the garden’. Some students did not attempt to answer the question.

Part B – Listening and responding in Chinese

In this part of the examination students were assessed on their understanding of the listening text and their ability to accurately convey appropriate information from the text in Chinese. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question. Students were not awarded separate marks for content and language. Responses that included the relevant information and were expressed clearly in complete sentences in Chinese were awarded full marks.

Teachers should provide students with learning activities that involve listening, note-taking and writing responses in Chinese on various subtopics prescribed in the study design. The character list in the study design should be the basis for students’ vocabulary build-up. Character-based learning activities should improve students’ ability to perform better in this section.

When writing their responses, students should include all relevant aspects of the information regardless of the order in which the information was presented. In other words, the information required in the answer may not be in the same order as in the original text. For example, Question 2a. asked students to list all the celebratory activities for the day, and 学古诗 (learning ancient poetry) was mentioned towards the end of the spoken text. Furthermore, this activity was a replacement for 灯笼游行 (lantern parade) due to wet weather. Fewer than 15% of students included this activity in their response.

Students who scored highly were able to identify all main relevant aspects of the information from the spoken text and interpreted it accurately and appropriately in complete sentences in Chinese. Their responses included words and phrases such as 演话剧、唱中文歌、做月饼、学古诗、爱心、兔子、花、样子、红、绿、五颜六色、口味 、中国文化、明信片、祝福。。。 (performed a drama, sang Chinese songs, made mooncakes, learnt ancient Chinese poems, love heart, rabbit, flower, shapes, red, green, various colours, flavours, Chinese culture, postcards, blessings etc.).

Mid-range responses provided some relevant and irrelevant aspects of information with lexical and grammatical errors such as 画剧 (picture drama)，名星片 (celebrity card)，节日举的庆祝活动有唱中文歌，做月饼，学中国的传统故事和讲中秋节的来历 (Celebration activities listed for the festival were singing Chinese songs, making mooncakes, learning traditional Chinese stories and telling the origin of the Mid-Autumn Festival).

Low-scoring responses were often too brief, for example, this answer to Question 2b.: 他们做的月饼有很多颜色，很好吃和好看。(The mooncakes they made had many colours, very tasty and pretty).

Question 2a.

An example of a correct response is:

中国来的学生演有关中秋节来历的话剧。大家一起唱中文歌。中国学生教大家做月饼。大家还在教室里一起学古诗。

(The students from China performed a drama about the origin of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Everyone sang Chinese songs together. Students from China taught everyone how to make mooncakes. Everyone learnt ancient poems together in the classroom.)

Question 2b.

An example of a correct response is:

因为他们把月饼做成爱心、兔子和小花的样子。做好的月饼有红的、绿的，五颜六色，还有各种各样的口味。

(Because they made mooncakes into shapes of hearts, rabbits and flowers. The finished mooncakes are in red, green and all kinds of colours. There are also various flavours of moon cakes.)

Question 2c.

An example of a correct response is:

因为这是张成第一次在国外过中国节日。他想不到大家都这么喜欢中国文化。大家还给他写了明信片，这真是一种别样的节日祝福。

(Because this was the first time Zhang Cheng celebrated a Chinese festival abroad. He was pleasantly surprised that everyone loves Chinese culture. He received a postcard from everyone, which was really a special festive blessing.)

Section 2

Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English

This part of the exam assessed students’ capacity to identify general and specific information from written and spoken texts and images and then translate the information in their responses into English.

Students are encouraged to take every opportunity to practise reading and listening to enhance their skills in these areas. As students needed to respond in English, they were in effect required to translate Chinese into English. Therefore, students needed to be accurate in word choice so that the original meaning was not lost in the translation. For example, some students used ‘hope’ when translating 更高的期望（higher expectation）which does not accurately convey the original meaning of the Chinese phrase.

Some students overlooked the information from the visual image. For Question 3d., some students listed a number of Wang Yue’s suggestions such as ‘waiting for the phone to pick up different accents and updating the reminder function’ without mentioning that his grandfather may get specialist help either at home or at the store. A small number of students’ illegible handwriting rendered their responses ineffective.

Question 3a.

An example of a correct answer is:

People’s higher expectations for the comfort of houses and the advancement of artificial intelligence have led to the increasing popularity of smart houses.

Question 3b.

An example of a correct answer is:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| At home | Away from home |
| * Gives owners the feeling of human touch by greeting them in a friendly manner as soon as they enter the house. | * Remotely controls the air conditioner by calling home. |
| * Gives owners various suggestions such as teaching them to cook delicious meals. | * Parents can use the computer in the office to watch/see what their children are doing at home, as if they were next to them. |
| * Cheers owners up by telling jokes and/or playing music. |  |
| * Remotely controls lights and kitchen appliances using wi-fi or smartphone. |  |

Question 3c.

All of the following:

* It can use voice to send and receive messages.
* It can remind people when to take medicine.
* It can check the weather forecast.
* It can check public transport information.

Question 3d.

Two of the following:

* Improve and update the reminder function.
* Send someone to his grandfather’s home to teach him how to use it.
* His grandfather can go to the shop to get help.

Question 3e.

All of the following:

* Not everyone can afford it.
* People are afraid that it will make people lazy.
* If AI fails to function, people may not know what to do.
* Voice function can’t be used immediately.
* It can cause anxiety to the user when important functions don’t work.
* Older people have difficulty using smart products.

Part B – Reading and responding in Chinese

Students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus text and to address the requirements of the task by conveying the relevant information from the text that was appropriate for the audience and the prescribed writing style and text type.

Student responses were assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria and the expected qualities published on the VCAA website. Students were not awarded separate marks for content and language accuracy; however, language accuracy was an important expected quality that was considered in the assessment.

It was possible to achieve a high score for this question without exceeding the specified word/character limit, which is shorter than the limit specified for Section 3.

Question 4

Students were required to accurately identify the main relevant points of the stimulus text and write a persuasive email to their Chinese class. The main relevant points of the stimulus are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * 时间/地点 * 读自己没读过的书/ 和别人交换书读 * 每读一本书，要写读后感 * 每个读后感可让中国山区小学的学生得到五元助学金 * 见到一些有名的作家谈写作心得，教大家怎么写好作文 * 有机会去中国旅行，看望山区里的学生 | * Time/ venue * Read books you haven’t read/ exchange books with others. * Write a book review for each book read. * For each book review, a primary school pupil in China’s mountainous areas may receive a 5-yuan stipend. * Meet some famous writers who will talk about their writing experience and teach everyone how to write a good essay. * Opportunity to travel to China and visit the pupils in mountainous areas. |

High-scoring responses included all of the above points, meeting all the requirements of the task about the audience, purpose, writing style and text type. They organised information and ideas logically and clearly throughout the response, manipulating language successfully to convey the original meaning with minimal reliance on the language in the stimulus text.

Mid-range responses included some of the main relevant points but also missed some significant aspects such as time and venue, which is required to promote a public event. Some of the features of the text type (email) were missing, such as time and date of the email, or the date of the email was written after the signature as if in a traditional letter. There was inappropriate or Anglicised use of vocabulary and grammar, for example，你可以从那里的学生学中文 (‘you may learn Chinese from the students there’).

Low-scoring responses showed limited or very limited understanding of the stimulus text or conveyed meaning by copying verbatim from the stimulus text. Some students did not seem to understand what they were copying, for example, 读书 (reading books) was copied as 卖书 (selling books).

In responding to this question, students should not attempt to create new ideas and information, but rather interpret the information from the stimulus text by paraphrasing and extracting the relevant points from the original content. Students are encouraged to be creative, but only in reorganising the information and restructuring the stimulus text to suit the purpose, audience, writing style and text type requirements. Copying directly from the text should be avoided as much as possible.

Section 3 – Writing in Chinese

Question 5

Students needed to include features of personal writing and of a diary entry such as date, time and place, along with their personal feelings and reflections. The response should establish a relationship between the reader and the writer. It needed to create a sense of personality for the writer in the reader’s mind, and emphasise ideas, opinions, feelings and impressions, rather than factual, objective information.

High-scoring responses adhered to the topic matter of learning to drive for the first time, describing and reflecting on their first driving experience. Mid-range responses usually diverted from the topic to describe less significant or irrelevant information such as sightseeing, a shopping trip etc. Some low-scoring responses misinterpreted the topic and described their independent driving experience when they obtained their driver’s license.

Question 6

Students who chose this topic needed to write an informative blog post about the life of a sportsperson, including, for example, their natural talent and gift for the sport, challenges or hardships on the road to fame, achievements and contributions to the sport. The information needed to be presented from an objective perspective for the writing to be informative in style.

A very low percentage (only 2%) of the students chose this topic. A high-scoring response needed to aim to convey information from the writer to the reader as clearly, comprehensively and accurately as possible. It should have used objective style and impersonal expressions. Normally it should have no particular point of view to convey, otherwise the writing becomes either persuasive or evaluative. It should generally use facts, examples, explanations, analogies and sometimes statistical information, quotations and references as evidence.

Question 7

Students needed to write a letter to their school principal evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed change to the school. Most responses addressed the question well, integrating relevant information and ideas into an effective piece of writing. They evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the four-day school week proposal appropriately for the context and purpose specified in the task, using some well-practised formulaic structures of evaluative writing. However, some of the expressions used were not appropriate, such as 水能载舟，亦能覆舟 (water can hold a boat afloat, as well as overturning it), which traditionally described the relationship between the country’s ruler and its people. In addition, many students were not aware that the tone or register of their writing needed to be appropriate for the audience, as a letter to the principal should be polite and respectful.

Some responses showed very little awareness of the task requirements. A small number of students evaluated school equipment and space rather than the proposed four-day school week, making their response irrelevant to the topic.

Students need to differentiate nuances between synonyms and use them accurately and appropriately. For example:

* 学生在家里不可以问老师问题 translates as ‘students at home may not ask teachers questions’, when what students meant to say was 学生在家不能问老师问题 (‘students cannot ask teachers questions while at home’).
* 可以 translates as ‘may’, denoting permission, whereas 能 translates as ‘can’, denoting ability or possibility.

As already mentioned, the use or misuse of homophones should be addressed in daily teaching and learning practices.