2024 VCE Chinese Second Language oral external assessment report

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-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Chinese-Second-Language.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.

Section 1: Conversation

What students did well

In 2024, students:

* engaged in a general conversation about their personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. Students discussed topics such as their experiences travelling in China, the historical attractions they visited and the traditional festivals they attended. When discussing their families, they referred to filial piety and the advantages and disadvantages of having three generations under the same roof
* provided a range of relevant information, ideas and opinions with an appropriate depth. When discussing reading as a hobby, students were able to talk about the books they read, the lessons they learnt from the books, and their favourite authors. When talking about their friends, students were able to describe the influence and impact their friends have on their lives
* elaborated on, clarified and defended ideas and opinions. When discussing their experience of learning Chinese, students reflected on how the language and culture have influenced their upbringing and career aspirations. When the assessors commented that it is not easy to remember so many characters, students were able to explain how they learnt by finding common elements in characters, such as radicals and other components, to help them extend their vocabulary
* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily and communicating confidently, and carrying the conversation forward with spontaneity. When discussing their own personalities, students were able to confidently explain how their personalities are influenced by their parents as well as how their personalities affect their friendships
* responded confidently and were able to advance the conversation, including the use of appropriate repair strategies as needed. Some students discussed how learning about aspects of Chinese culture such as Confucianism has taught them to do more in terms of respecting their elders, taking care of the young and listening to their parents. They also reflected on the ways it has helped to improve their relationships with teachers and other students at school. Students were able to use repair strategies effectively: for example, by correcting 我的朋友非常丰富 (my friends are extremely plentiful/abundant）with the statement 对不起。我是说我的朋友非常多 (I am sorry. What I meant to say was I have   
  a lot of friends.)
* used appropriate vocabulary. Most students were able to use appropriate vocabulary when responding to basic questions such as ‘How many people are there in your family?’, ‘How do you get along with your siblings?’, ‘What do you do over the weekend?’, and ‘What is your school like?’ Some students were also able to incorporate appropriate Chinese idioms or sayings into their responses, such as家和万事兴 (A harmonious family brings prosperity to everything) and 在家靠父母，在外靠朋友 (At home, rely on your parents; outside, rely on your friends)
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures. Students effectively used structures such as ‘一… 就 …’ (as soon as …), ‘因为 … 所以 …’ (because … therefore …),‘即使 … 也 …’ (even if … , … will …) and ‘要是 … 就 …’ (if … then …). Most students were able to indicate tenses by using time expressions or auxiliary verbs such as 要 or 将 to indicate something will or is going to take place
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* ensure adequate preparation for the conversation in terms of relevance, depth and range of information, ideas and opinions. Some students responded to the question 你有宠物吗? (Do you have any pets?) with only a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response: 有 (Yes, I have) or 没有 (No, I don’t have). Students should practise providing more detailed and comprehensive responses to questions. When asked a question such as   
  你和爸爸妈妈的关系怎么样? (What is your relationship with your parents like?), students are expected to provide a more detailed response than 好 (good)
* practise answering a range of questions to be able to advance the conversation. Students should develop strategies to cope with unexpected questions or questions that are asked in unexpected ways. For example, some students could respond to the question 你中学毕业后要做什么? (What would you want to do after you finish high school?) but could not respond to the question 你毕业后有什么打算? (What do you plan to do after you graduate?)
* build confidence through practising interactions in the language. Students are encouraged to practise conversing with different classmates and teachers in Chinese, focusing on maintaining eye contact and delivering their responses confidently and fluidly
* practise using more complex sentence structures and syntax. Some students tended to use a simple subject-verb-object sentence pattern as well as sentence structures such as ‘因为 … 所以 …’ (because …, therefore …). Students should practise using some of the more complex sentence patterns listed in the study design, such as ‘虽然 … 但是 …’ (although … but …) and ‘… 又 … 又 …’   
  (a structure similar to ‘both …, and …’ in English, indicating that two qualities exist at the same time)
* practise using repair strategies to advance the conversation when needed. Students are encouraged to practise expressions such as ‘关于这个问题也可以说 …’ (with regard to this question, it can also be said that …), 我可以再补充一些 (I can add some more) and 这样说可以说得更好 (it would be better to say it this way)
* revise grammar. Students’ expression was sometimes influenced by English: for example, saying 我打网球在学校明天, which is a direct translation of the English sentence ‘I play tennis at school tomorrow’. This phrasing incorrectly places the time, 明天 (tomorrow), and the place where an action happens,   
  在学校 (at school), after the verb, 打 (play). The correct way to phrase this is 我明天在学校打网球 (subject-time-place-verb-object). Another example is 我的跳舞不好, which is a direct translation of the English sentence ‘my dancing is not good’. The correct way to phrase this is 我的舞跳得不好or我跳舞跳得不好 – the ‘得’ structure is used in both to provide additional information about the verb ‘dance’
* build vocabulary specific to the student’s personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. When preparing for the conversation section of the examination, students are reminded to avoid direct translations from English. Moreover, where idioms are used, students must be sure to use them appropriately. For example, the idiom 泪如雨下 (cry like rain) is not appropriate in the following context: 老师 在课堂上说我，我泪如雨下 (The teacher scolded me in class and I cried like rain). Likewise, the idiom 丰富多彩 (full of variety and life) is not appropriate in the following context: 我们学校的设备丰富多彩 (Our school’s facilities are full of variety and full of life)
* practise pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. While students’ accents do not prevent them from communicating effectively with assessors, students should be mindful that some errors in pronunciation can affect the meaning of an expression. For example, 参观 *cānguān* (visit) can become餐馆 *cānguǎn* (restaurant), and 酗酒 *xùjǐu* (heavy drinking) can become 谢酒*xièjǐu* (refuse drinking). Some students confused the sounds of ‘n’ and ‘l’, as in 胡辣汤 *húlàtāng* and 胡纳汤*húnàtāng*. Students should be careful not to speak too fast, and they should ensure they are effectively using tone and the rhythms of spoken Chinese to convey meaning and emotions
* avoid providing pre-learned responses. Students should listen carefully to the assessors’ questions and respond appropriately rather than presenting from a memorised script: for example, ‘I like to learn about how they celebrate Chinese New Year and how they do calligraphy’ is not an appropriate response to the question ‘Have you ever celebrated Chinese New Year at school?’

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In 2024, students:

* clearly introduced the focus of their subtopic – chosen from either of the prescribed themes, ‘The Chinese-speaking communities’ or ‘The world around us’ – alerting assessors to the image brought to support the discussion of the subtopic. Most of the subtopics were selected from the prescribed theme ‘The Chinese-speaking communities’ and included historical personalities, traditional festivals, Chinese arts and paintings, and food practices
* demonstrated in-depth knowledge of their subtopic. It was clear that some students had thoroughly researched their subtopics, and they presented detailed, well-organised information. These students appeared deeply engaged with their subtopic. For example, when discussing the subtopic 周杰伦 (a famous singer), students not only discussed the singer’s journey to fame, their songs, singing styles and musical achievements, but also explored how the singer promoted Chinese traditional culture through their music and their influence on the younger generation
* used the image skilfully to support the discussion on the subtopic. Students effectively engaged the assessors by referencing the images during their explanations or while expressing their opinions on the subtopic. Other students demonstrated their understanding of the subtopic by discussing the content depicted in the image: for example, when discussing the subtopic 饺子 (Chinese dumplings), students referred to the image to explain how the pastry is made, the types of fillings used, the reasons behind those choices, and the symbolic meaning of the dumplings
* engaged in a discussion using relevant information, ideas and opinions
* clarified, elaborated on and defended opinions and ideas
* communicated effectively with assessors throughout the discussion, including through the use of repair strategies. Students who scored highly did this very well and spoke fluently, presenting their knowledge or illustrating their points with specific examples from what they studied. They were also able to use repair strategies: for example, correcting a mistake by saying ‘对不起！我说的应该是 …’ (I am sorry! What I should have said was …)
* used appropriate vocabulary that was relevant to their subtopic. For example, some subtopics, such as 老秤 (traditional Chinese scales) and 麦迪山石窟 (Mati Si Grottoes), required use of very specific terms
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Where students were able to demonstrate excellent pronunciation and intonation, it added authenticity to their discussion.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* choose an appropriate subtopic to suit their ability and interests and an image that effectively supports discussion about the selected subtopic. Some students chose subtopics that were too broad, such as   
  火锅(hot pots), which made it difficult to focus their discussions or guide the assessors effectively. Students must also ensure that their choice of subtopic is appropriate for their proficiency level; for example, the Great Wall of China is a subtopic that requires advanced vocabulary and sentence structures to effectively discuss its history and building materials
* prepare a wide range and depth of information, ideas and opinions with an original perspective on the subtopic. Students should ensure their knowledge of the subtopic goes beyond surface-level facts. For example, for the subtopic 中秋节 (Mid-Autumn Festival), students should be able to explain how it got its name and how it relates to Chinese Culture. For the subtopic 武则天 (Wu Zetian; the most famous female emperor in Chinese history), students should know when the Wu Zhou Dynasty was and how Wu Zetian became emperor
* avoid presenting basic facts about their subtopic without expressing opinions or deeper insights. For example, if元宵节 (the Lantern Festival) is chosen as the subtopic, students should not only be able to tell the assessors about when the festival is held, its activities and the special festive food associated with it, but also explain factors influencing how people celebrate the festival and why people engage in the activities
* convey information learnt from sources but also express an opinion with an original perspective on the subtopic. While many students effectively presented factual information about their subtopic, only a small number cited specific sources or expressed well-formed opinions. For example, when discussing the subtopic 中国式的教育 (Chinese-style education), some students could not respond to the question 你认为中国式的教育有什么好处? (What do you think are the benefits of the Chinese-style education?)
* use the image to support the discussion on the subtopic. Some students brought detailed images to the examination but could not answer questions about the content depicted in them. Students should be very familiar with their image and refer to it throughout the discussion, without needing to be prompted by the assessors
* avoid relying on pre-learned responses that do not address an assessor’s question. Where students rush to respond without listening carefully to the assessor’s question, they are more likely to provide irrelevant or incomplete responses
* practise using repair strategies. Students should practise correcting themselves after they realise they have made a mistake
* revise grammar. Common errors included:
* incorrect sentence patterns, such as using the passive voice 被 (*bèi*) instead of 对 (*duì*) for phrases like ‘to be interested in’, which should be expressed as ‘对 (*duì*, in) … 感兴趣 (*gǎn xìngqù*, to be interested)’
* incorrect measure words, such as 一辆汽车 instead of 一个汽车 (a car)
* comparatives using the 比 structure, such as 坐高铁比坐飞机一点方便 instead of 坐高铁比坐飞机方便 (It is more convenient to take the high-speed train than to fly)
* build vocabulary specific to the selected subtopic. Some students lacked key vocabulary related to their subtopics. For instance, when discussing 春节(Chinese New Year), some did not know that ‘celebrate Chinese New Year’ is idiomatically expressed as 过年. Similarly, when discussing 饮茶 (Yumcha) in Guangdong Province, some were unfamiliar with 肠粉 (*chángfěn*, a common dish at Yumcha)
* practise pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Students should be aware of how tonal differences affect meaning, and should focus on maintaining an appropriate tempo to ensure they are understood. Common mispronunciations included the following examples:
* 参观 (*cānguān*, visit) was pronounced as 餐馆 (*cānguǎn*, restaurant)
* 景色 (*jǐngsè*, scenery) was pronounced as 金色 (*jīnsè*, golden)
* 保鲜 (*bǎoxiān*, keep fresh) was pronounced as 保险 (*bǎoxiǎn*, insurance).