

Chinese (continuers)

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

CHINESE (CONTINUERS)

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Generally, students coped well with both the folio and the in-depth study tasks. Students met the standards and requirements detailed in the subject outline. Though most students coped well with the tasks set by their teachers, there are a number of areas for improvement. Some of the questions and issues are recurring.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Task Analysis

The folio was generally very good. Issues arose with task design that did not allow students to achieve higher grades, such as text analysis and interaction. Questions in text analysis tasks may limit students' ability to achieve higher standards. Teachers should develop more reflective and analytical questions so that students can have a deeper understanding in their text analysis tasks.

Some text analysis tasks were not very consistent or clearly designed, which therefore limited students' achievements. There were weaknesses in task design because in many cases there was little opportunity for students to analyse linguistic features and to interpret and to reflect. A good example of a question is asking students to explain a saying, e.g. 'Fu ru dong hai, shou bi nan shan'. A second good example asked students to provide three different responses to a newspaper article from three different perspectives: parent, student, and teacher. The question asked students to analyse the different stylistic devices used in the responses. In a third good example, some schools had two texts for their text analysis task and required students to compare the two texts. This provided students with an opportunity to reply to reflective and analytical questions, as well as to grammatical questions. However, in general, students were only asked for factual information from texts; quite a few students did not interpret questions in their text analysis task.

Interaction

Questions on some topics, such as talking about yourself and future aspirations, were not challenging enough to allow students to show their ability. The question needs to provide the opportunity for some depth in order for students to articulate and to explain 'why' and 'how' in their responses.

On the other hand, other topics were too challenging. The students needed too much factual information, and those who did not have this information were unable to show their language ability or their ability to interact and discuss.

Task Production

Tasks were usually suitable, such as 'You have a part time job; describe your experience and how it will help in the future'. Another good task was to apply for a scholarship for which a student needed to attach her/his resume.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Some topics did not give good students enough scope to show their ability or to show evidence of research. Some students needed to demonstrate more depth and more evidence of the research in their responses. A good topic, for example, was Tang Ren Jie (Chinatown). This provided students with the opportunity to do some primary, authentic research by interviewing people who have businesses in Chinatown. Also, information in Chinese that is obtained in an interview is easier for Continuers level students to understand than that obtained from internet texts, which are quite difficult. Topics such as 'leisure activities' or 'comparing a Chinese school with an Australian school' may not provide students with scope to show research, as it often seemed that students were just writing from personal experience.

There were occasional technical issues with CD identification. Some CDs were not labelled clearly or did not identify the track number for the students. Some CDs could not be accessed.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

In 2013 most students demonstrated a high level of preparedness for the oral examination. They engaged themselves fully with the examiners. Students responded to various questions with great enthusiasm. The majority of the students also prepared very well for the discussion section; they were able to discuss their in-depth study topics with great personal interest and competency.

Section 1: Conversation

The majority of the students handled this section very well. Students were able to talk about topics including their families and friends, school, hobbies, holiday experiences, and their future plans. Students were asked to describe some particular aspects of their lives, with the examiner typically engaging in the conversation to further explore the topic. The responses were generally given in detail appropriate to the questions and contributed to the flow of the conversation. Students were usually able to adapt to a change of direction in the conversation. The most competent students answered using complex sentences with appropriate cohesive devices. Oral examiners attributed the success of the students to very good preparation.

Conversely, there were also a few students who needed the questions to be repeated, who gave very short answers, or who did not understand the questions. Some limited their answers to simple sentences and tended to be repetitive, and the most common grammatical problems were in the form of incorrect word order. Some had relied heavily on rehearsal. Some answers were somewhat limited in scope and depth, and those who needed help generally asked for it in a generic manner instead of specifically addressing the particular problem at that point in the conversation.

Section 2: Discussion

The discussion was an exploration of the student's in-depth study. Examples of topics included Chinese festivals, obese children in China, security of Chinese food supply, traditional Chinese instruments and music, China's one child policy, youth issues in China, Chinese food or tea culture, school-life comparisons (e.g. between country schools and city schools or between Chinese and Australian schools), famous people, and comparisons between Australian and Chinese culture.

The better prepared students were able to engage in a discussion with the examiner appropriately. Most students could adequately express meaning, albeit they tended to use simple sentences and some stumbled in their attempts to use cohesive devices to craft more complex sentences, for example '像/和/跟……一样, 比……更'. Incorrect grammar was used in the both the discussion and the conversation, including a tendency to have incorrect word order — for example '在中国旅行是也舒服', '她不但中国人, 而且年轻人' — and to repeat key words or phrases.

The most capable students were able to reflect on both the content of their topics and on their research processes, but many were not able to do a good job on both dimensions of this reflection. However, some students did not seem to grasp what reflection actually means. Most students used the internet as their source of information but were unable to demonstrate in a short conversation how appropriate their texts actually were. Students rarely used support objects, but if they did, they demonstrated that support objects would be very useful for nervous students because they would give them a focus for their information.

Overall, examiners indicated that most students had prepared their topics thoroughly and provided evidence in support of their conclusions. Students' ability to communicate in Chinese their understanding of their topics was handicapped by limits in their language skills, due to the specialist terminology related to some of the topics. Consequently, in general, the discussion was not handled as well as the conversation was. The weakest discussions did not demonstrate understanding of the Chinese expressions and key words required to convey the dot points. A suggestion is that teachers should help students to choose topics that match their levels of language skills, and another is that teachers should assist students with the selection and development of their dot points.

Written Examination

Students generally did well in the 2013 written examination. The listening section was completed satisfactorily. Reading and Responding Part B was handled very well by most of the students. However, the results from Reading and Responding Part A were quite different. Some of the students did not grasp the methods for critical textual analysis. Teachers are encouraged to provide more guidance to the students

in this area. In Section 3 Writing in Chinese, 75% of students chose Question 11 and performed with great competency.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Text 1

Many students were not sure what was expected of them for Question 1(b). For example, some students neglected to include the information on the weather in Guangzhou, whereas the description words such as modern and beautiful, food, and shopping were well covered.

Text 2

Text 2 was generally well understood. Most students were able to give appropriate details about the symptoms of the sickness and the doctor's advice.

Text 3

Responses to Text 3 were generally detailed, especially the comparison between Lili and Daming. However, for Question 3(a), it appears that some students may not have understood that they were required to first describe the attitude (for example 'She has a positive attitude') and then provide evidence to support their statement. For Question 3(c) many students did not understand the meaning of the word '护士'.

Text 4

For Text 4, many alternative descriptions were provided about Xiaohong's personality. Different descriptions could be justified with evidence from the text, such as 'impatient' (she bought the CD without first consulting her older brother) or 'caring' (both the CD and the dark chocolates were loved by Mum). The description 'outgoing' had a less clear justification that she was going to the movies with friends.

Text 5

Text 5 was generally completed well with the students able to identify both the general and the specific aspects of the contents of internet shopping, and to provide detailed information in their answers.

Overall the interpretation of meaning in all of the texts was generally very good, and the texts allowed for levels of understanding such that all students understood something. However, some analyses of tone, register, and linguistic features were not explored. Teachers need to ensure that they provide their students with guidance on how to answer questions with proper analysis in the context of texts and justification of opinions.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

For Text 6, most of the students had difficulty identifying either the text type or the features of a report from the text. Some students justified the third question using their own words rather than drawing evidence out of the text.

For Text 7, most of the students did well in all of the questions, but some responses were lacking in detail. For example in Question 7(c) where students are asked to analyse how different the Chinese school's routine is for the author, a few students simply answered 'different' or 'very different' without supporting their answer with any information from the text. This indicated weak understanding of the last two paragraphs.

Overall, the students generally understood the two texts quite well and handled the two questions quite well. Some demonstrated their capacity to extract, evaluate, and criticise the texts through the flexibility of their responses.

Interpretation of the meaning in the texts was generally very good as evidenced by the grasp of details. Some students demonstrated their capabilities by using their own words to summarise the ideas. However, analysis of language in texts needs to be improved because some details were commonly missed. Some students found it difficult to extract from the text the detailed evidence that was necessary to justify their answers.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

Most of the students were able to grasp the meaning of the text and their responses were relevant to the context, purpose, and audience. The responses of most students could be readily comprehended, although incorrectly written characters were relatively common.

About 70% of student responses were generally based on key words in the text and gave adequate details, ideas, and information but with limited elaboration. About 20% of student responses demonstrated a higher level of capability by elaborating on the topics, and in doing so demonstrated both a thorough depth of understanding of the text and more sophisticated language skills in terms of sentence structures and paragraphing. About 10% of student responses still used English language mechanisms when attempting to express ideas in Chinese; for example, conditioning elements were placed at the ends of sentences.

Most students used the appropriate letter format, for example ‘尊敬的’, ‘此致’, but some misused addresses, such as ‘亲爱的先生’. The most common errors with the letter format were the omission of a person’s name or title, or of the date. Otherwise the students generally followed the logical progression in the original letter to organise the information in their responses and so the responses were generally well organised and easy to follow. A lot of conjunctions were used, such as ‘因为…所以’ and ‘虽然…但是’, but some students could not use ‘比’ correctly.

Section 3: Writing in Chinese

In this section, the students chose to answer one question out of three options. About 20% of students chose Question 9, 5% of students chose Question 10, and 75% of students chose Question 11. In general, those who chose Question 11 coped better than those who chose Question 9.

The majority of the responses were relevant to the topic and conveyed an appropriate level of detail and opinions within context, although there was the impression that some responses were in rehearsed language. More than half of the students were able to elaborate by offering additional information and/or by using examples in support of their opinions. The breadth and depth of the treatment of the topic was better in the responses to Question 11 than to the other two questions, for which students used only one or two sentences to discuss the issues further. Most students could elaborate and support their opinions, but for some the evidence was quite weak.

The range of expressions used in the responses to Question 11 was greater than that for Question 10, which in turn was greater than that for Question 9. In the

answers to Question 9, the expressions were often wrong or culturally inappropriate. Approximately 25% of students used very high levels of cohesive devices and another 25% used very basic cohesive devices or none at all. About 35% of students were quite accurate in their expression, but 25% wrote at a low level of accuracy. Common errors were in the use of ‘在’, ‘比’, ‘了’, and ‘地’ and there was confusion between the use of ‘的’ and ‘地’, for example ‘我们高兴的（地）, 快快的（地）去看长城’.

In this section, students were strongest in their ability to organise information. About a third of the students were at a superior level, a third of the students were competent, and a third of the students needed further improvement. Text type conventions were well mastered.

Generally, students were good at writing texts in similar forms as the texts in books, but struggled if they had not had much exposure to written models. This was evident when they wrote about their own life experiences. Teachers are advised to pay more attention to the style of language used in authentic school conversations, assembly speeches, descriptions of school sporting events, and so on.

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2013, 84 students presented for the oral and written examinations. Moderation of the school assessment resulted in confirmation of most grades. There was a wide variety of standards presented for moderation. It was evident that teachers who had familiarised themselves with the Stage 2 Subject Outline and school assessment requirements had prepared their students well and based their assessment decisions appropriately on the performance standards.

Chinese (continuers)
Chief Assessor