

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/01
Speaking

Key messages

This component is made up of three sections and candidates are required to:

- make a formal presentation on a topic clearly related to a Japanese context;
- take part in a discussion of issues arising from the presentation;
- discuss issues of a more general nature at an appropriate level.

To perform well candidates need to:

- ensure that their use of Japanese is generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature;
- demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary;
- interact with and ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections in order to access the full range of marks available.

General comments

Many candidates achieved a very high standard of spoken Japanese this year, speaking confidently using a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The speaking examination was well-conducted in most Centres, which allowed candidates to perform to the best of their ability. The strongest candidates had natural and fluent conversations with the Examiner, covering varied and interesting topic areas.

It is important for candidates to remember to ask questions of the Examiner in the Topic and General Conversation sections. Five marks are available for Seeking Information and Opinions in each conversation section, and these cannot be awarded unless there is evidence that candidates know how to formulate questions and use different interrogative forms. Examiners are reminded that if candidates have not asked any questions by the end of the conversation sections, they must prompt by saying, 'Do you have any questions to ask of me?'

Most Examiners were aware of the need to cover two or three topic areas in the General Conversation. These should be covered in some depth, to give candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge of the topic under discussion, and to allow them to use the range of structures and breadth of vocabulary expected at this level. However, if a candidate is unresponsive Examiners should rephrase and simplify their questions, or introduce another topic, so that the candidate is speaking for most of the time, and there are no long silent gaps. Examiners should take care not to repeat topics in the General Conversation that have already been discussed as part of the Topic Conversation.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1: Presentation

Candidates chose a variety of interesting and appropriate topic areas for their presentation, including subjects such as temples in Japan, transport systems and stress amongst high school students. Candidates were clearly well-prepared for this part of the Speaking test, and succeeded in showing their knowledge of their chosen topic. Candidates should remember that there is a requirement for presentations to demonstrate their knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where Japanese is spoken. Most candidates did this well, but some spent too much time talking about themselves or their own experience, which meant that less information about Japan was presented. Many candidates were able to express their opinions and ideas, manipulating advanced grammar and using a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates were well prepared for this section, and conversations flowed smoothly. When candidates are choosing the topic for their presentation, they must remember that they will be expected to talk more widely on the subject in this section. Candidates are reminded to expand their answers and not just repeat information which has already been given in the presentation. They are also reminded to express ideas and opinions and to naturally ask questions of the Examiner. Examiners are reminded to ask questions which the candidate has not already answered in the Presentation. Examiners are encouraged to use open-ended questions in order to enable candidates to give extended responses and talk about their opinions and ideas. At the end of this section Examiners should let the candidate know that they are now moving from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation.

Section 3: General Conversation

Candidates generally performed well in this section, with stronger candidates holding an interesting and wide-ranging discussion giving their opinions and ideas freely, and using a range of vocabulary and structures. Candidates would benefit from having as much conversation practice as possible with Japanese speakers.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** a multiple choice question in which candidates must identify the word (or words) with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;
- **Question 2:** make a sentence with the provided grammatical changes;
- **Question 3 and Question 4:** candidates should formulate answers with their own words and refrain from copying from the text;
- **Question 5:** respect the word limit. In part (b) candidates should express their own ideas rather than repeating ideas from the two texts;
- **Language:** when preparing for the examination revise the basic grammar, structures and kanji list.

General comments

The vast majority of candidates performed very well and showed good understanding of the passages and the questions. Although it did not always affect the marks awarded for content, there were a number of mistakes with particles and candidates are advised to practise using them correctly.

Candidates are required to write their answers in the spaces provided; if they decide to change a response and need to write it somewhere else on the question paper, it is helpful for Examiners if they indicate in the original response area that this is the case. All candidates are reminded of the need to write clearly and legibly as Examiners cannot give credit for work they cannot read.

When answering the comprehension and summary questions, candidates' answers must be based on what they have read in the texts, not on their own ideas and opinions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates found this exercise straightforward and answered all or almost all questions correctly. In **Question (b)** a number of candidates chose answer 2 instead of answer 1. **Question (d)** proved to be the most challenging in this exercise with many candidates choosing either answer 1 or answer 3 instead of answer 2.

Question 2

Most candidates produced an appropriate sentence using the required grammar. In some cases, sentences were started but not completed meaning that the mark could not be awarded.

(i) e.g. 安かったらこの本を買います。

Some candidates had difficulties with the ta-form with verbs or with adjectives such as 日本語ができるたら or 天気がわるいたら. There were also some candidates who did not finish their sentence.

- (ii) e.g. 日本の先生によると、テストはかんたんです

This was answered well by the majority of candidates and there were many sentences which showed good knowledge of Japanese at this level. Some responses were less successful and did not make sense, such as 健康によると毎日運動しました.

- (iii) e.g. テントや食べ物などキャンプに持って行きます

Some candidates ran into difficulties in this question by trying to use more complex verbs, for example 食べますや飲みますなど or 運動することなど勉強することなど.

- (iv) e.g. 本だけでなく、自転車ももらいました

Some candidates produced good sentences but many found this challenging and either did not complete their sentences or made grammatical mistakes. Some handwriting was illegible which meant that the answer could not be considered for a mark.

- (v) e.g. ぜひ友だちにこの映画を見てほしいです

This question proved a little challenging for some candidates as the subject could not be わたし.

Nevertheless, many responded well. A few candidates used ほしい and therefore a mark could not be awarded even though the sentence was otherwise correctly written.

Question 3

Most candidates appeared to have understood the text and therefore they were generally able to respond well to the questions. Candidates seemed to be aware that the number of marks available for a question corresponds to the number of points required. Some wrote more than the required number of points which is not necessary.

- (a) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (b) Some candidates attempted to use their own words to respond to this question, but no marks could be awarded for answers such as 店と病院はなくなりません or 運転できなくなります.
- (c) Most candidates answered this question correctly. A few candidates wrote answers such as 若者は古い文化にきょうみがなくなりました or they just explained about forestry, fishery and agriculture.
- (d) Many candidates performed very well on this question. Answers which were less successful included ideas which were not in the text or incorrect information from the text, for example 40% instead of 45%.
- (e) Some answers to this question did not make sense, for example 人々の生活は悪くて不便になります or 産業は自然のために悪いです. Also, as in **Question (c)**, some candidates just explained about forestry, fishery and agriculture.
- (f) Some candidates did not mention all four of the aspects required to answer this question or they said that the government helps かそ地.

Question 4

Many candidates performed well on this question and demonstrated a good standard of Japanese at this level. A few candidates copied their answers from the text which resulted in answers which did not show a full understanding of the passage or questions and also had an effect on the mark for Quality of Language.

- (a) The vast majority of candidates answered this question successfully.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify the correct information from the text although a few wrote about how the people in *Yamada-machi* grow rice or why *Yamada-machi* was famous.
- (c) The majority of candidates answered this correctly. Others said that *Daiichi no matsuri* is one of the art festivals. Some candidates demonstrated a wide variety of vocabulary with phrases such as 町を盛り上げるため.
- (d) As mentioned above, candidates should ensure that the number of points they make in their answer corresponds to the number of marks available. Some candidates did not mention where the arts were going to be displayed or what was going to be displayed there. Many wrote about how the artist and people in the town have conversations, which was not a correct answer.
- (e) This question was the most challenging and the majority of candidates gave answers such as 町が人気になります or 町のすばらしさを発見します or 食文化や生活を中心にします or おんせんやおまつりが楽しめます.
- (f) Many candidates answered this well but there were some who wrote about home cooking or experience of life in the town. There were some mistakes such as いそがしくなかった and all candidates are advised to check their answers carefully.
- (g) A mark could not be given if the answer just mentioned that the visitors became fond of the town or they visited the town repeatedly. A small number of candidates did not attempt to answer this question.

Question 5

The vast majority of candidates answered this question well and demonstrated good understanding of both passages. There was clear evidence that most candidates knew how to respond to both **parts (a) and (b)** in order to access as many marks as possible, although some wrote more in answer to **part (b)** at the expense of **part (a)**.

Many candidates were able to offer a variety of points about how *kasochi* can be made interesting for lots of different people although not so many wrote about what is going to happen in *kasochi* in the future.

- (a) Most candidates managed to identify relevant points from both texts. However, many candidates wrote about *Yamada-machi* rather than the general situation in *kasochi*, and some did not attempt to write about the future in *kasochi*. Therefore, not many candidates were able to access the full range of marks available.

It is very important for candidates to avoid expressing their own knowledge about the topics or writing about their own experiences in **part (a)**, for example 米を輸入しなければならなくなります or 店代が安くなります。

- (b) The majority of candidates were able to express their opinions about how to make *kasochi* lively again in the future. There was a variety of ideas such as making a website, using the media or opening a wild zoo. A few candidates suggested that people should live in a town in order to protect the nature in *kasochi*.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it difficult to structure their ideas grammatically to communicate clearly in writing. There were a number of mistakes with particles and candidates are advised to practise using them correctly.

There was a tendency for candidates to mix polite and plain forms in their writing, and they should ensure that they are consistent when writing. In terms of the number of characters allowed in **Question 5**, candidates who showed good knowledge of the kanji in the syllabus were less likely to exceed the character limit as they did not have to rely on writing in hiragana.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- read the question carefully, and ensure that they answer the exact question asked;
- write a short, relevant, informed response that is well-illustrated and coherently structured;
- start by writing an essay plan to help them organise and structure their thoughts;
- ensure effective use of the target language, placing emphasis on range and accuracy;
- write in paragraphs, including short introductory and concluding paragraphs, and use appropriate rhetorical and cohesive devices to aid flow;
- use appropriate kanji and a range of more sophisticated vocabulary;
- use vocabulary they know that they can write accurately.

General comments

In general terms the majority of candidates performed well, showing their competence in the target language. Many essays were well-organised and written in good language, with appropriate ideas and opinions backed up with evidence, examples or references. Weaker responses included those where candidates had fewer ideas, or were unable to organise them: such responses tended to end up rambling, or not have enough content.

Candidates must read the question very carefully and address the question asked. For example, in the question asking about how to live a long, healthy life, some candidates started writing about the importance of diet, and then drifted off topic and started writing about food. Stronger responses consisted of fluent and coherent essays, and focused on the precise requirements of the question. Within the allocated numbers of characters, candidates planned the essay well, and included personal experiences and opinions to produce original essays. Such essays were convincing to read and interesting.

A number of candidates did not write in paragraphs. Candidates should start by producing a brief essay plan, and make sure that they make each point in a separate paragraph. They should also use cohesive devices such as *そして、しかし、一方では、また* and rhetorical devices such as *でしょう、ではないでしょうか、とも考えられます*.

Accuracy of language was sometimes low, and candidates are generally advised to concentrate more on accuracy, even if this means that they do not have such a range of language at their disposal. Transitive and intransitive verbs caused a lot of problems, and there were a number of candidates who did not use *を* correctly or seemed unaware that *i*-adjectives conjugate.

Candidates also need to work on orthographical accuracy. A large minority of candidates did not use katakana correctly. Many others transcribed English words into katakana, perhaps in the hope that these were Japanese words. Others used a lot of simplified Chinese characters.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 にちじょう
日常生活

This question was reasonably popular, and candidates were keen to write about the contrast between Japanese ^{きゅうしょく} 給食 and the experience in their own country. Unfortunately, many candidates seemed unaware of the nuance of ^{きゅうしょく} 給食 in Japanese, and wrote about the contrast between going out of school to eat lunch and buying lunch in the school canteen. Arguments used included cost, healthy food choices and children's safety. The majority of candidates argued for ^{きゅうしょく} 給食, but a small minority argued against in a quite convincing manner.

Question 2 ^{ほりつ ちつじょ} 法律と秩序

This question was reasonably popular, but many candidates did not address the detail of the question and wrote a general essay on drugs, rather than exploring the reasons why drug-related crime has been rising. Candidates generally had a good range of ideas as to why young people are attracted to drugs, including peer pressure, glamour, relaxation, and lack of parental attention. Because the causes interrelate, many candidates seemed to jump from one idea to another without structuring their writing. Their statements were also sometimes superficial, with little solid backing evidence.

Question 3 ^{けんこう} 心と体の健康

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question. Many candidates wrote about exercise, diet and mental health, and were able to include a range of evidence and supporting details. Many essays were of a very high standard, with a clear introduction, three or four short, specific paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph extolling the virtues of a healthy lifestyle to ensure long life.

Question 4 ^{こよう しつぎょう} 雇用と失業

This question was not very popular. Essays generally addressed both the reasons why traditional industries are in decline and what could be done about it. Sometimes it was not clear who was the subject of the sentence (or paragraph), so there was some doubt as to whether the government, the industry itself or young people were being called on to advertise and support traditional industries.

Question 5 ^{しんぽ} 科学と医学の進歩

This question was not chosen by many candidates. Candidates were clearly familiar with the arguments for and against animal experiments, but often their level of vocabulary was not at a sufficiently sophisticated level to discuss their ideas fully. A large number of candidates outlined the reasons for and against, but did not present a conclusion.