

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/01
Speaking

Key messages

This component is made up of three sections and to perform well candidates need to:

- make a formal presentation of 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.

The use of Japanese should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Interaction with the examiner is an important criterion in the conversations. Candidates must ensure that they ask questions of the examiner in both the Topic and General conversation sections in order to access the marks available for Seeking Information and Opinions.

General comments

The speaking examination was conducted extremely well, with all the examiners using skilful and sensitive questioning techniques to allow candidates to show their ability in the target language. Most candidates produced a high standard of spoken Japanese. Both candidates and their examiners are to be congratulated on the standards achieved.

It was noticeable this year that several candidates did not ask any questions as part of the Topic or General Conversation sections, and therefore could not be credited with marks for *Seeking Information and Opinions*. Candidates need to ensure that they seek as well as provide opinions, and examiners should prompt the candidate to do this if they have not asked a question by the end of each conversation section.

Three topic areas should be covered in order to show candidates' ability in the target language in the General Conversation section, and these should not overlap with those topics already discussed in the Topic Conversation section.

The paperwork submitted by Centres was generally very good, but examiners should make sure that the addition of marks is carefully checked, together with the transfer of these marks to the final mark sheets before these are submitted.

The recording at most Centres was audible but Centres are reminded of the need to spot check their recordings to make sure that the recordings are clear. It is also essential that both a copy of the Working Mark Sheet and the Moderator's copy of the MS1 have been filled in.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

Candidates had clearly prepared well for the presentation element of the speaking test, and most achieved a high standard. Some candidates chose very mature subject areas and developed them well, showing they were able to express their opinions whilst also manipulating advanced grammar and using a wide range of vocabulary.

Section 2: Topic conversation

The Topic Conversation should continue on the same subject as that chosen by the candidate for the first section, and should aim to develop it and discuss it, giving the candidate opportunities to give opinions and

defend his or her own point of view. 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 conversation section. In some cases this year, the topics did not lend themselves to this wider discussion; when choosing a topic, if candidates cannot think of six or more possible questions that might develop from their presentation, the topic is unlikely to be a fruitful source of discussion.

The stipulated timings were generally adhered to in this section.

At the end of this section, examiners should let the candidate know that they are now moving from the Topic Conversation section to the General Conversation.

Section 3: General conversation

The General Conversation section should try to explore in some depth 3 or 4 topic areas from those listed in the syllabus, and these should be different from that chosen for the presentation. The subjects should be of interest to the candidate, and questions should become more in-depth as the conversation develops. In order to do this well, examiners need to prepare a wide range of questions on different topics in advance of the examination, to maintain fluency in the conversation.

Overall, the majority of candidates performed very well in the General Conversation section, with some candidates having a fluent conversation with their examiners.

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Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- read the whole paper carefully before answering the questions
- follow the instructions in the rubrics carefully
- try to write their responses in their own words, as far as possible
- focus on the question set
- make sure that their responses stay within the prescribed character limits

General comments

The overall performance this year was very good. The majority of candidates completed the three sections of the paper, and most of them responded to each question well. Many candidates succeeded in rephrasing their answers to show their understanding of the reading passages. A lot of candidates tried to use kanji in their answers, and are reminded of the need to take care when writing kanji to ensure that they are written accurately. It is also important for candidates to learn to use the appropriate particles in their writing in order to make their ideas or opinions clear.

Candidates are reminded of the importance of reading the instructions carefully. Answers to the reading comprehension questions must be answered using information provided in the reading passages. Candidates cannot be credited for giving information from their personal experience or knowledge. In a few cases candidates wrote longer answers than required. They should ensure that their answers fit on the lines provided on the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates scored full marks on this question. The most common mistake that candidates made was in **Question (b)** choosing answer 2 “病気になる”. A small number of candidates made a mistake in one of **(c)** or **(d)**. In **(c)**, the answers 1 “なくてもだいじょうぶ” and 3 “あってもなくてもいい” were equally chosen by the candidates, indicating that candidates may not have understood ひつような.

Question 2

The majority of candidates produced grammatically accurate sentences in this question. Most candidates managed to keep their sentence short and used the correct grammatical structure. There were many good sentences written this year.

In **(i)**, a few candidates made a spelling mistake with など, and wrote なの. However, this question was generally well answered.

In **(ii)**, candidates are expected to produce a “hearsay” sentence, not “look/sound like” sentence in this question, and most candidates who did not gain a mark here wrote a “look/sound like”.

In (iii), candidates needed to produce a sentence with a structure by manipulating the *ない* form to *なくてもいいです*. Most candidates managed to use *ない* form accurately.

In (iv), a lot of candidates misunderstood *安い* (cheap) as *やすい* (easy to do). Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the text carefully and paying attention to how the given grammatical structure is used in the text before attempting their own sentence.

In (v), a few candidates did not attempt this question. Some spelling errors were seen for *だけでなく...も*. Candidates are reminded to read through and check their answers in order to prevent these sorts of errors.

Question 3

The vast majority of candidates performed extremely well in this exercise and most candidates managed to respond to each question. A lot of candidates expressed their answers in their own words which showed they had a thorough understanding of the passage.

Candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation. Where more than one mark is available, candidates need to give more than one piece of information.

- (a) Candidates needed to write what the two kinds of energy were, including their names, in order to gain full marks in this question.
- (b) Candidates were expected to mention *for the entire world* in their answer, as well as that wind power makes electricity.
- (c) This question was well handled by all candidates.
- (d) This question proved to be difficult for candidates. There were answers such as *it costs a lot and it takes time* or *there are small wind blades* or *it is cheap and easy to build*. A few candidates gave answers taken from their general knowledge, which could not be credited.
- (e) A common answer to this question was: *It is easier to produce energy than on land*. In order to gain full marks, candidates needed to give two pieces of information.

Questions (f) to (k) were handled well by most candidates.

Passage Two

Question 4 was attempted very well by the vast majority of candidates this year. The content of their answers and the quality of language were linked very well so that candidates demonstrated both their understanding of the text and their ability to respond accurately in the target language. In some cases, candidates could have improved their answers by making greater use of kanji. Examples were seen where candidates used hiragana instead, and introduced an error into their work by doing this: for example *天気* (weather) was written in hiragana as *でんき* (electricity) - using kanji would have avoided this simple mistake.

The majority of candidates scored full marks in Questions (a), (b), (c) and (f). Question (d) proved to be the most difficult, and incorrect answers given included *'...the energy can be kept...'* or *'...it was invented in the USA...'* or *'...the energy can be used anytime it is needed...'* Other cases where candidates were not credited with full marks usually occurred because answers were not full enough. Candidates should be made aware of the relation between the number of points expected and the number of marks shown in brackets. There were several instances where candidates only mentioned 1 point, where 2 or more marks were available.

Question 5

In general, candidates answered this question well, showing their ability to write clearly in Japanese, and to manipulate and use AS level grammar confidently. They expressed their opinions and managed to show what they had understood from the passages.

Candidates need to avoid mixing written and colloquial Japanese as well as plain and polite Japanese for this exercise.

Many candidates were able to argue which form of energy they felt was suitable for their country.

- (a) Many candidates managed to extract 10 distinct points from the passages. Part of the skill involved in this exercise is to answer within the character limit. Candidates therefore need to be careful that they do not repeat similar points unnecessarily, as this will use up valuable space. Candidates must also be aware that they cannot be credited for including information taken from their own general knowledge. All points must be taken from the reading passages.
- (b) Some candidates managed to express their opinions with very well structured sentences using a variety of grammar and vocabulary appropriate for AS Japanese.

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Paper 8281/03
Essay

Key messages

- Focus on the key words in the question. Candidates should think carefully about what the question is asking of them before they start to write.
- Points should be developed but not repeated. Careful planning should help achieve this.
- Ideally the first paragraph of the essay should introduce the topic in the question and the discussion should end with a conclusion that sums up the arguments used and provides a final answer to the question.
- To perform well in this paper, candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of the vocabulary used in the context specific to the question or topic rather than just the meaning given in the dictionary.

General Comments

Overall, candidates performed well on this paper, and most candidates made a good attempt at answering the questions. Candidates appeared to be well prepared for the examination and there were some very strong performances.

As always, there was a complete range of responses, from thoughtful, well-structured essays to those where candidates struggled for ideas and the means to express them.

Many candidates showed they had an excellent command of Japanese. They had an impressive array of vocabulary at their disposal, both general and topic-specific, and were ambitious in their use of structure. There were some candidates who, despite having a wide ranging vocabulary, could make improvements in their use of rudimentary grammar, particularly in quite basic areas such as the use of particles and verb forms. Candidates should be encouraged to try and leave some time at the end of the examination to check for these sorts of language errors.

It was pleasing that most candidates wrote within the prescribed number of words (between 600 and 800).

Most candidates are aware of the need to provide an introduction and a conclusion, and use paragraphs well. It is important that candidates study the essay question carefully, so that they are clear about what they are being asked to write. Those who had read one or two vocabulary items in the title and then made false assumptions about what was required, were unable to write essays that were relevant enough to reach the highest marking bands. The same was true for those who wrote an essay on the topic area, but failed to address the specific title. It can be helpful for candidates to refer to the title as often as necessary throughout the essay in order to maintain relevance, develop strong arguments and reach a solid conclusion. Some thinking time before starting to write is very beneficial, as an essay with considered arguments makes a better impression than one with a number of very superficial observations. Those candidates who consider both sides of the question tend to produce better essays, because they have more ideas to work with and are less likely to be repetitive.

Topic 1: 仕事と自由時間^{じゆう}

This title was popular with many candidates. The majority of candidates pointed out that to have free time is important in order to refresh themselves, and consequently having a good rest helps them to stay healthy and work productively.

Topic 2: メディア

This question was chosen by a good number of candidates. There were a few thoughtful responses about the importance of not being over influenced by advertisements, which were supported by their own experience. A lot of candidates cited unfortunate experiences they had had when purchasing through the Internet. However, nearly all candidates also managed to point out the advantages of having a wealth of information available through the media. The common conclusion was, '*...it is important to choose information carefully, and not believe everything.*'

Topic 3: 環境保護^{かんきょうほご}

This was also a very popular topic. A good number of candidates had a clear understanding of recent policies adapted in many countries to raise awareness of the crisis facing endangered species.

Equally, many showed a commendable ability not only to consider the prospect from their own point of view, but also to project themselves into the role of someone working in this area, to focus on relevant or possible means of prevention. As a result, candidates were able to suggest a wide range of solutions initiated by governments as well as by individuals.

Topic 4: 教育

Not surprisingly this was a popular choice of topic, as acquiring an education is central to the lives of candidates. There were some vehement arguments put forward in essays, in favour of a greater number of subjects, but the majority tended to opt for fewer subjects. A number of candidates used their own timetable as an example in their introduction, and addressed only one side of the argument. Some had sufficient ideas to write quite a successful, if one sided essay, others ended up repeating themselves. Unexpectedly, there were not any candidates who made a comparison between studying a larger number of subjects more superficially, and fewer in greater depth.

Topic 5: 文化生活または遺産^{いさん}

This was the least popular topic, however candidates who chose this topic seemed well prepared. There was clear evidence that they had studied traditional events in Japan, including specific vocabulary, and not only did they use this knowledge in the introduction but they also made a comparison with current practices in their own country.

In their conclusion, they stated their own opinion and developed the points they had made successfully. Most essays relating to this topic were very interesting to read.