

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

Candidates were clearly well prepared for the examination, and their hard work was evident in the high standard achieved this year. 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.

It was noticeable once again 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

The majority of candidates chose an appropriate topic area for their presentation, such as *School Life*, *Japanese Meals*, *Young People in Japan* and so on. There was clear evidence that candidates had prepared well, and they succeeded in showing their knowledge of the topic and their ability to communicate in the target language. A few candidates chose more ambitious topics like *War and Peace*, *Plastic Surgery* or *Bullying*, and were able to express their opinions, manipulating advanced grammar and a wide range of vocabulary. This was very impressive for AS candidates.

Section 2: Topic conversation

The Topic Conversation should continue on the same subject as that chosen by the candidate for their presentation, and should aim to develop and discuss it giving the candidate opportunities to give opinions and defend his or her own point of view. It is very important for candidates to choose a topic appropriate to their linguistic ability, in order to hold an interesting and flowing conversation. This was done well in the most part.

Examiners are encouraged to use open-ended questions in order to enable candidates to give extended responses and talk about their opinions and ideas.

The stipulated timings were generally adhered to in this section.

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, most candidates managed to show their ability to communicate clearly in Japanese, with stronger candidates holding a productive discussion giving their opinions and ideas freely. Sympathetic examining enabled weaker candidates to perform to the best of their ability.

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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 was very good with a pleasing number of candidates scoring high marks in each section again this year. The majority of candidates managed to rephrase their answers in their own words and expressed their understanding successfully using a variety of kanji. Candidates are reminded of the importance of reading each question carefully before answering in order to ensure that they give full and accurate responses. Candidates should be aware that the number of marks given in brackets () at the end of each question or part question is an indication of the number of separate points candidates need to make. For example, a question worth 2 marks requires 2 distinct points to be made. Candidates are also reminded of the importance of submitting legible scripts. There were several candidates this year who used pencil and then traced over their writing in pen, which resulted in work which was very difficult to read.

It is recommended that the candidates do not mix plain and polite forms in their writing.

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

Several candidates made one or two mistakes in this first question. The most common mistake that candidates made was in **Question (d)** choosing answer 1 “まがっている”. A few candidates said “みどり”. The next most common mistake was in **Question (a)** answering with 3 “うつくしさを考える”. A few candidates made mistakes with **Question (b), (c)** and **(e)**.

Please ensure that candidates read the instructions before they start answering the questions.

Question 2

Many candidates successfully produced accurate sentences. It is important for the candidates to understand how the grammar is used in the passage in order to correctly make their own sentences in this exercise.

In **(i)**, many candidates wrote a potential sentence instead of a passive sentence.

In **(ii)**, the majority of candidates produced correct sentences.

In (iii), several candidates made mistakes, producing incomprehensible sentences, such as “ラジオにきいてきました”. Some did not use the correct て form here or they confused it with できます.

In (iv), some candidates had difficulty with the structure てもいいです. This exercise required candidate to produce a ても (even if) sentence.

In (v), some candidates incorrectly produced a noun + ため sentence. Candidates are reminded to read through and check their answers in order to prevent these sorts of errors.

Question 3

The majority of candidates attempted to respond in this question in their own words, and most performed well.

Candidates are reminded to check the mark allocation for each question, as this will indicate how many points are required to be awarded full marks.

- (a) Many candidates succeeded in answering this question correctly. However, a lot of candidates did not seem to know the difference between はじまりました and はじめました.
- (b) A few candidates did not include むろまち時代 in their answer. There were also a few candidates who said that people wanted to have flowers for decoration, which was not the correct answer.
- (c) Very few candidates made mistakes in this exercise, saying “花をつかって気持ちを見せる” or “家のいまにきめた”.
- (d) This question proved to be difficult. The most common mistake was to say “花のアレンジのし方をならう” or “花はひとのこころをまなぶ”.
- (e) Candidate needed to include “花をきれいに見せたい” in their answers. Some candidates made up their answers without referring to the passage, saying ‘you can relax looking at beautiful flowers / the flowers have a life’ which could not be credited.
- (f) This was the least well-answered question. Candidates needed to write 日本は花、えだ、はがすべたバランスよく見えるようにアレンジする. .
- (g) Many candidates answered this question correctly. The word けんざん was the key word needed in the answer.
- (h) Candidates needed to include ステージやイベントでははでにアレンジします in their answer to be awarded full marks; many candidates did not manage this. A few candidates answered from their own knowledge. Candidates must take the information from the passage when responding to questions.

Passage Two

Question 4

Candidates coped very well with this question, with the majority successfully managing to respond in their own words. A few candidates wrote “庭” as “てい”, which is the sound reading of the kanji.

- (a) Many candidates scored full marks. Where mistakes were made, these were usually in grammar with なければならない.
- (b) The most common mistake among candidates was to write 当時の人が作りたかった社会が分かる, which was not the required answer; candidates must read the question carefully before answering. Also, a few candidates did not manage to mention religion.
- (c) The majority of candidates performed very well. A few candidates mentioned the different gardens or the fact that Japanese gardens are old, which did not answer the question.

- (d) Incorrect answers were given for both 浄土式庭園 and 書院式庭園. A few candidates did not attempt to answer this question. Candidates could not be rewarded for writing that it was the oldest garden or the most famous garden.
- (e) This question was not well-answered. Answers stating *'because they used a big stone'*, or *'the garden looks like the sea and a river'* were not credit worthy.
- (f) Most candidates coped well with this question. Some candidates needed to give an explanation of the garden to achieve full marks. A few candidates made mistakes by saying that only rich people or people who have power in society could create such a garden. Some candidates showed high language competence by using the words “富裕層”/“一般の人”.
- (g) Candidates needed to write both the similarities and differences between Japanese gardens and Western gardens in order to be awarded full marks.

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 polite and plain forms in their writing, and should write within the stated word limit.

- (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) The best responses contained examples of candidates describing the traditions of their country. Some candidates managed to express their opinions with very well structured sentences using a variety of grammar and vocabulary appropriate for AS Japanese.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03

Essay

Key messages

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

- read the question carefully and select the title with which they feel most comfortable.
- write a relevant, informed response that is well illustrated and coherently structured, careful planning should help to achieve this.
- ensure effective use of the target language, placing emphasis on accuracy and displaying a suitably advanced, mature writing style, as well as demonstrate a good use of Kanji and appropriate topic-related vocabulary.
- use the structures which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

There was a huge range of responses, ranging from thoughtful, well-structured essays to those where the candidate clearly struggled for ideas and the means to express them. A few candidates showed 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 structures.

However, there were some candidates who, despite having a wide ranging vocabulary, struggled with rudimentary grammar concepts and made basic errors in areas such as usage of particles and verb conjugations.

It appeared the accuracy of language had dropped slightly this year and this affected marks allocated for Language. Candidates are always advised to leave some time at the end of the examination to check for careless language mistakes.

The majority of candidates used 'genkouyoushi' this year and consequently most candidates wrote their essays within the prescribed number of characters (between 600 and 800). Candidates must realise that it is part of the assignment to keep the number of characters to the prescribed number and that to go beyond the number will not improve their marks for either Content or Language.

Nearly all candidates were aware of the need to provide an introduction and a conclusion and used paragraphs judiciously (clear evidence of good teaching practice). It is also important that candidates study the essay question carefully so that they are clear about what they need to include in their essays. Failure to do this led to candidates making false assumptions about what was required and they were placed in low band marks. The same applied to those who wrote an essay on the general topic area and failed to address the specific question. It would seem good practice for the candidates to make a list of the relevant points to be covered and to constantly refer back to them. Candidates are best advised to make a plan with their considered arguments before starting their essay. This helps to ensure the essay is focussed and relevant throughout.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 食べ物と飲み物

This topic was the second most popular on this paper. There were a few thoughtful responses about the importance of keeping traditional food. Candidates wrote many interesting essays based on their own experience in their own countries. Many candidates mentioned the impact of fast food in society as a reason for why traditional food was disappearing. Plenty of Katakana words were used and it was noticeable that candidates found ファーストフード in Katakana difficult to spell correctly.

Question 2 はってんとじょうこく
発展途上国

This question was chosen by a good number of candidates. There were a few thoughtful responses about how to support third world countries. Some responses displayed not only a high level of language but also their knowledge and awareness of this difficult problem the world is facing.

Most candidates pointed to a shortage of food and clean water as a major problem in third world countries and that the solution was providing financial support. However, some candidates listed very concrete ideas, such as improving the education of local people, enabling them to come up with their own ideas to solve the problems.

Question 3 かんこうじぎょう
旅行と観光事業

Relatively few candidates chose this essay topic. Most candidates successfully wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of having an increase in tourists. The work of weaker candidates was characterised by producing a one sided essay, without developing their arguments and thus repeating the same points.

Question 4 せだい ちが
世代の違い

This was the most popular choice of question, perhaps as social networking is very much a part of many candidates' lives. There were some essays denouncing Facebook, Twitter and Line, but most found the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. A number of candidates wrote about the overuse of mobile phones, for instance using a mobile phone to communicate even if they are sitting face to face. Some wrote successfully about the difficulties of communication between different generations. Many candidates seemed to overlook the need to refer back to the generation gap, as was stated in the title, and did not answer the question satisfactorily. Again it must be emphasised that candidates must read the question carefully and cover *all* the points in the title in order to achieve high marks.

Question 5 きかい びやうどう
機会の平等

This was the least popular topic this year. However, most candidates who chose this topic seemed well prepared and presented their arguments effectively based on the current situation in their own countries. The range of vocabulary used in their essays was very impressive as was their ability in expressing themselves in the target language.