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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Chinese (9CN0)
Paper 3: Speaking

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Paper overview

The GCE Chinese 9CN03 was set as per the GCE 2017 Specification and is consistent with the format of the previous 9CN03 paper. As a speaking assessment, this paper rewards students who can demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the cultural context by giving ideas, examples and information on one of the published sub-themes and on a chosen subject of interest which students have researched and linked to the social and cultural context of the Chinese-speaking world;
- ability to analyse aspects of the cultural context by presenting and justifying valid-arguments, viewpoints, and conclusions;
- ability to interact and to hold a natural and fluent discourse;
- skill in manipulating language accurately; and
- ability to respond to written texts in speech.

The paper consists of two tasks, which are carried out in consecutive order in one session. The assessment score is out of 72 marks with a total assessment time of 21 to 23 minutes. (16 to 18 minutes of speaking time, plus 5 minutes' preparation time for Task 1). In order to allow sufficient time for the students to access the full range of assessment criteria for both tasks, the recommended time for Task 1 is 6 to 7 minutes, and 10 to 11 minutes for Task 2.

The total assessment mark of Task 1 is 30, based on one of the eight published sub-themes.

- Theme 1: The Changes of Modern Chinese Society – Family; Education and Work
- Theme 2: Chinese Culture – Traditions; Activities
- Theme 3: The Development of Chinese Society - Communication & Technology; and Economy & Environment
- Theme 4: The Impact of Reform since 1978 – Reform; and China & UK relationship

Students have a choice between two sub-themes assigned by the assessment grid. There are two prompts on the stimulus cards which are given as a springboard to the discussion. All the cards are printed in both traditional/full characters and simplified characters, and students can speak in Cantonese or Mandarin according to the language they enter for the exam.

The total assessment mark of Task 2 is 42, based on a subject of interest that students have chosen for their independent research project (IRP). They are free to choose any subject related to the cultural and social context of the Chinese-speaking world.

As this is the third series of this Specification, most of the teachers and students are, with the reference to the Examiner's Report and examination papers, well attuned to the requirements of the paper. This paper is marked according to principles consistent with the pre-pandemic session and there is a decent

number of very good performances. The following section will discuss the students' performances in further details.

Students' Performances

Task 1 - Discussion on a theme

Part 1 Responses to a stimulus card

Most students responded well to the prompts and demonstrated their appreciation of different aspects of the culture and society of the Chinese-speaking world, elaborated with relevant information and examples. However, there were students who failed to observe some key words in the statement/questions, e.g. 'single-child' in CN3, 'around the world' in CN7 and did not respond to the statement fully. Others did not make use of the time recommended to discuss the topic in depth and often relied on their teacher-examiners to ask follow-up questions in relation to the statement on the stimulus card. As a result, their conversations turned out to be an interview rather than a discussion.

There were a small number of students who did not give the teacher-examiners opportunities to ask the prescribed questions one by one, but responded to both prompts in one go and some teacher-examiners asked both questions in the beginning and let students answered them altogether.

Part 2 Discussion on the overall theme

Majority of the teacher-examiners were able to broaden the discussion to cover other aspects of the overall theme, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the cultural and social context and to analyse aspects of the theme by developing and justifying arguments and drawing conclusions. However, some of the discussions regarding the dates and celebratory activities of festivals, introduction of a book, daily use of mobile phones or school exchange experiences remained to be merely straightforward and generalised ideas, without substantial analytical content, or showing of justifications and arguments. Others missed this part and moved onto Task 2. As a result, students were not able to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria and did not have access to the full range of marks for this task.

Task 2 – Independent Research Project

Part 1: Independent Research Presentation

I am pleased to report that, comparing to previous exam series, there is an increasing number of students who are aware of the assessment criteria and are able to introduce their research statement, to summarise two named written sources used and to give a personal response to what they have read within the time limit. However, there are still a significant number of students who had overlooked the original intent of this part of the assessment and presented their research results or their comments on their chosen topic without naming any

source and/or referring to any authors' ideas. As their ability to understand and respond in speech to Chinese written texts could not be assessed, they did not score in this section.

While students could select their IRP from one of the four themes, many of those who chose to do so were not able to go beyond the specification sub-themes, to show a clear focus on the Chinese culture and Chinese-speaking society, or to have conducted wider reading on their chosen subject.

A small number of students did not meet the criteria of assessment as they failed to conduct their research in relation to the Chinese-speaking communities or to have based their research on the literary works or films of Paper 2.

Part 2 Discussion on Independent Research

Students who had made use of the key findings on the RP3 form often performed well, for they were able to give relevant information. However, some students seemed to have discarded the research mode after they finished their two-minute presentation and tended to respond to teacher-examiners' questions from their personal experiences, with little supporting information or references; while others lost focus on the Chinese cultural and social context. As such, many of their discussions deviated from their research and developed into a general conversation. Students are reminded that this follow-up discussion is not only to assess their ability to communicate information about and demonstrate appreciation of different aspects of culture and society related to the Chinese communities, but also to show their ability to respond critically and analytically to different aspects of the Chinese culture and society. Providing relevant (research) materials to justify their viewpoints, developing arguments and drawing conclusions are vital to reach the higher band of the mark scheme.

Quality of language

A large number of the students demonstrated very good command of the language and were able to produce coherent speech and to demonstrate accurate usages of vocabulary and grammatical structures. However, there were students who spoke fluently with correct pronunciation and intonation, but their simplicity of lexis and syntax did not always result in articulate communications. Others whose spoke with limited lexical items and expressions often hindered clarity of communication and as a result, prevented their meaning from being conveyed.

It is also evident that some students struggled to understand the teacher-examiners' questions due to their pronunciation and/or choices of vocabulary.

Interaction

Students' ability to interact with the teacher-examiner is assessed in both tasks. Almost all the students were able to demonstrate their ability to give spontaneous and relevant responses to what they have heard and sustained

their conversation, though some showed hesitation at times. Many students were able to check their teacher-examiner's understanding and elicit opinions from the teacher-examiners. However, most of them sounded contrived and some initiated this at inappropriate moments. Taking the lead to develop conversation remains to be a challenge to many students.

General administration

Most exam centres conducted the assessments correctly and uploaded the scripts with relevant documents in a timely manner. However, some failed to upload them within two working days of their assessment taken place or had some forms missing, which inevitably caused some delay to the marking progress. Centres are advised to check the scripts prior to uploading, for there were scripts which were not in the right format, not of the relevant language, or if the students' voices were too soft to be heard. It could have been helpful if the microphone was placed close to the student during recording with little interferences.

Paper Summary

Based on their performances in this paper, students are offered the following advice:

- Read the stimulus card carefully, paying attention to the key words in the statements and questions and prepare their responses accordingly.
- While utilising the recommended time for each task, ensure Task 2 Presentation is kept within two minutes.
- Ensure their IRP has a clear focus on Chinese culture and society.
- State their research question/statement on the RP3 form in Chinese or English and record 6 to 10 key findings of their research in English, which they are prepared to give information about and to analyse their findings; ensure a sufficient range of details to meet the assessment objective.
- Include a summary of at least two named written sources in Chinese used as part of their research, outline the authors' main points/ideas and give a personal response to what they have read in their presentation.
- Respond to questions; support their viewpoints, ideas and arguments with relevant information, examples and/or references, and ensure all materials are clearly linked to the Chinese culture.
- Interact with teacher-examiner spontaneously, check understanding and elicit opinions naturally and at appropriate points. Initiate communication by taking the lead to develop the conversation.
- Ensure the lexis and syntax are correct, and pronunciation and intonation are intelligible and accurate. Show variation in the use of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Further information and advice can be found in [Paper 3 \(Speaking\) FAQs \(pearson.com\)](#).

