

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Japanese (5JA02) Paper 01

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Speaking in Japanese

While most centres coped commendably well with the requirements of the new syllabus, there were a significant number of centres whose candidates were disadvantaged for one or more of the following reasons:

- Poor or missing recordings.
- Incorrect test length.
- Candidates who appeared to be without their 30 'helpful words' when tackling task 1.
- Absence of questions designed to elicit a range of responses e.g. the past tense, the candidate's opinions etc.

As has come to be expected from the previous syllabus, candidates performed consistently well on their prepared topic, many of them using their notes and talking or answering prepared questions fluently for the first two minutes and following this with a further two minutes of excellent unprepared conversation on related topics. A primary reason for candidates to score less than full marks on Task 1 was a lack of follow-up questions from the teacher/examiner which meant that the candidate could not fulfil his/her potential. A worrying number of teacher/examiners failed to follow the guidelines and hindered the performance of their candidates by not following the specifications in this regard.

For both tasks, successful candidates had clear methods for responding to the teacher/examiner by taking clues from the question itself; these candidates also asked for repetition when they had not clearly understood. Weaker candidates resorted to mumbled responses or silence, not realising, perhaps, that even a *しりません* or a *わかりません* might be appropriate and gain some credit.

Across both tasks candidates were credited for all attempts to speak Japanese. Teacher/examiners were not always sympathetic to the needs of the candidates: interrupting, speaking too fast or too slowly, asking a question the candidate had already answered, asking *どうして* at inappropriate points. Again, these were all hurdles for weaker candidates to overcome. In some instances, candidates were given no opportunity to use the past tense and this may adversely have affected their result. Sympathetic teacher/examiners helped candidates to gain more marks by keeping the conversations simple and giving concrete examples when the candidate appeared to have lost the thread of the question. Candidates should be encouraged to use adjectives and adverbs to enhance their answers, and a simple *'から'* on the end of many answers would greatly project the level of communication achieved. This year there was evidence of candidates being better prepared in this respect. Where candidates can add *とおもいます* and *たいです* their answers are considerably more convincing.

As in previous years, a significant number of candidates lacked an ability to pronounce words clearly and particular difficulties were encountered in *さい・せい、きらい・きれい えいご・えいが*. This year too there was

confusion in the general time words such as きょねん and ことし, and candidates often had difficulty expressing dates correctly. For many sessions the question word どこ has caused difficulties and this year was no exception.

The majority of teachers are to be congratulated and commended for their dedicated hard work in preparing their candidates for this new syllabus and the performance of the majority of candidates, from strongest to weakest, reflected this effort.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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