CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations
Excellence in education

Cambridge Pre-U

Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese Principal Course

9778/1 Speaking Test

Notes for Candidates

Notes for Candidates for Pre-U Short Course Mandarin Chinese 1341 are provided in the 1341/1 Teachers' Notes Booklet, which is sent to Centres on the basis of Estimated Entries.

These notes are intended to help you feel prepared for your Pre-U Principal Course Speaking Test.

FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

The Mandarin Chinese Principal Course Speaking test (9778/1) takes place between 15 March and 15 May, before the written examinations.

The examination lasts about 12-15 minutes and consists of two sections, which take place in the following order:

- Section 1: Prepared Topic and Topic Conversation (5-7 minutes).
- Section 2: General Conversation (6-8 minutes).

A Cambridge Examiner will visit your school or college to conduct the test. At the beginning of the day you will have the chance to meet him/her and go through the procedures for the test.

The Examiner will record the test. While you are speaking he/she will make notes and mark the test. The Examiner is not allowed to tell you how you have done or show you the mark sheet.

The Speaking examination tests a range of language skills – pronunciation and accuracy of tones, accuracy, range of expression, spontaneity and fluency – all of which are a natural part of conducting a conversation. If you wish to score high marks, you should make an effort to use a variety of topic-specific vocabulary, not just common words, and a variety of linguistic constructions.

You are NOT allowed to use any dictionary during any part of the examination.

SECTION 1

Prepared Topic

- You need to choose and prepare a topic for this part of the Speaking test. Your prepared topic must relate to the history, current affairs or culture (including art, cinema, literature and traditions) of the Chinese world. Where you do not fulfil this condition, the potential mark for the content of the presentation will be halved. It is therefore important that in your presentation you make specific reference to a country where Chinese is spoken.

- You must fill in a **Prepared Topic Submission Form**, listing the area of your prepared topic, which your teacher will arrange to send to the Examiner at least two weeks before your Speaking test. You may keep a photocopy of this form to bring into the test with you.

- In the examination, you will be expected to give a presentation of about 2 minutes on your chosen topic. This can be prepared at any time during the course, so you will have time to research a topic you are interested in. It is worth resisting the temptation to choose a topic too early on, as over-preparation may leave you feeling bored with your chosen subject. It is important that you deliver your presentation in as natural a way as possible.

- It will be up to you to show what you know and to communicate your interest and knowledge to the Examiner. You will need to show evidence that you can present relevant facts, express ideas and opinions and put forward points for discussion. When choosing a topic, consider in what ways a conversation about it might develop: if you cannot think of half a dozen questions you could be asked about it, it is unlikely to present a fruitful source for discussion. Marks are awarded for the ideas and opinions you express, so you need to think carefully about how you can express these if the topic you choose is very factual. If the only way to continue

conversation on the topic would be to ask for additional factual information, the topic is unlikely to score highly for the expression of opinions and the ability to raise issues for discussion.

- You **may not** bring in a script for your presentation. If you wish, you may prepare, and bring into the examination room, a cue card (postcard size, maximum number of characters/pinyin syllables = 50) to remind yourself of the points you wish to make.

- If after speaking for about 2 minutes you show no sign of coming to the end of your prepared material, the Examiner will probably interrupt you and start asking questions.

  The presentation will lead into a conversation about your chosen topic.

Topic Conversation

- During your delivery of the prepared topic, your Examiner may possibly make notes and will be considering what direction the questioning might take. The mark scheme requires assessment of both comprehension and responsiveness, so you should aim to develop your answers beyond simple short responses. In the course of the topic conversation, you must be prepared to substantiate, elaborate, clarify, qualify, etc, issues from the presentation. This may involve being asked to supply additional factual information where appropriate, or to express and defend a point of view. The Examiner's objective will be to encourage you to contribute as much as possible to the conversation and to advance beyond simple sentence responses, without playing too large a part in the conversation him/herself.

- The Examiner is not necessarily an expert on your chosen topic. He/she will adopt the position of an interested layperson, and ask a series of general, open-ended questions, designed to allow you to talk freely about the aspects of the topic which have particularly interested or engaged you.

- Having completed the topic conversation section, your Examiner will probably signal the beginning of the general conversation, with some comment such as '…*fine, now let's move on to something more general*…'.

SECTION 2

General Conversation

- This section will begin with some fairly straightforward questions and will move quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues relating to the topic areas listed in the syllabus:

  1 Family
  2 Young People
  3 Education

  4 Tourism
  5 Urban and Rural Life
  6 The Environment

  The Examiner will probably not ask you about all six topic areas listed in the syllabus: how many topic areas are covered will depend on how the conversation progresses. However, at least one topic area covered will be taken from Topics 4, 5 and 6. Questions in the General Conversation section will not cover the same ground as has been dealt with in the Prepared Topic and Topic Conversation.

- You should be able to discuss some matters of current interest relating to these topic areas, though it will not be assumed that all candidates will be closely informed on all matters of serious contemporary concern. In order to give you the opportunity to extend your responses and develop and guide the conversation in a direction which you find interesting, the Examiner will ask questions of the *'why*…?', *'how*…?', *'tell me more about*…' variety, rather than closed questions which may be answered by *'yes/no'*.

- The general conversation section must not consist of a predetermined series of questions to which you provide a 'correct' factual answer, but should rather develop into a genuine conversation, in which there may be no 'correct' answers, only an exchange of opinions. You should take this opportunity of expressing your own ideas, rather than merely responding as briefly as possible to questions asked.

- You may not take any notes into the examination for this section of the test.

Remember that the examiner is on your side and wants to reward your strengths – but cannot do this if you keep them hidden!