



PSAC 2020-2021

Examiners' Report – Modern Chinese

INTRODUCTION

The 2020/2021 Modern Standard Chinese PSAC Question Paper was based on the prototype paper set by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate. A 4th cohort of Grade 6 students sat for the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Examination, as part of the ongoing Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform.

The Modern Chinese assessment focuses on the following areas:

1. Reading Comprehension (40%)
2. Writing (30%)
3. Grammar and Vocabulary (30%)

These assessment objectives are in line with the goals and objectives of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Primary Education. A variety of tasks were set at different levels underpinning the principle of greater fairness to allow students from the whole spectrum of the ability range to demonstrate their proficiency levels.

General Comments

The 2020/2021 Modern Standard Chinese PSAC Question Paper was based on the prototype paper set by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate. 57% of the candidates passed the examinations, among which 14% of the candidates got grade A. Nevertheless, there were still 43% of the candidates who were unable to attain a pass mark in the subject. Teachers should give greater consideration to this, and should investigate into its causes in order to improve pupils' performance.

Specific Comments

Question 1A

The purpose of this question is to assess candidates' knowledge of common vocabulary. It relates to the labelling of 5 pictures and carries a total of 5 marks. Most candidates could not cope well in this exercise. Among the 205 candidates, 67 of them scored 0 marks. Many candidates were unable to write “裤子/衣服”, “雨伞” and “船/舟”. Some candidates wrote “芒果/水果” and “猫/动物” incorrectly.

Question 1B

The purpose of this question is to assess candidates' reading comprehension ability at a basic level. It is done through tasks which require candidates to match a sentence to the corresponding picture. It carries 5 marks. This was the most popular question. Most candidates did very well here.

Question 2A

The question consists of 10 multiple choice items and carries 10 marks. A range of grammatical structures were tested through multiple-choice items in this question. This year, the use of adverb of degree, the verb forms, measure word, basic comparison with "bi", conjunction, interrogative pronoun, personal pronoun, prepositions were assessed.

Candidates did not perform well. The poor performance in this question revealed pupils' poor knowledge of Chinese grammar.

The best done items were:

Item 3 这本故事书很有意思。

Item 4 虽然这里的冬天太冷，但是我还是很喜欢。

Item 5 哥哥比弟弟高。

Item 8 我和朋友们都很高兴，我们要一起去郊游了。

The following items were found challenging:

Item 1 今天马丽有点儿不舒服。Many candidates still have difficulties with the use of adverb of degree, so they wrongly gave “大点儿”、“小点儿” or “多点儿” as an answer.

Item 2 白板上写着几个汉字。

Many candidates chose “读” and “看” as these verbs are often used with the particle “着”. However here the only answer should be “写” as there is the location phrase “白板上” which implies that the verb has to be a static one.

Item 6 下个星期我们要庆祝妈妈的生日。Should the candidates pay particular attention to the key word “下个星期” which means next week, obviously they would have been able to determine that they have to choose the verb which has been conjugated in future tense. In Chinese, “没+verb” is used to express negation of past action. “Verb + 了” is

usually used to indicate the past tense, whereas “Verb+完” is usually used for action which is completed.

Item 7 书店在哪儿? 我要去买书。Many candidates wrongly provided “什么” as answer, as they were distracted by the word “书” found in the answer sentence, they thought that the question is looking for an interrogative pronoun which is used to enquire about an object. Some even chose “怎么样”, which is obviously a wrong answer as it is usually used to ask for the state or condition of something. These candidates did not understand the context of the sentence.

Item 9 我的腿很痛, 因为我摔倒了。Some candidates still have difficulties with the use of conjunction. Moreover, it seems that they did not understand the meaning of the sentence, it seems that many of them have chosen an answer at random.

Item 10 杯子里有热牛奶。Many candidates wrongly provided “左” and “右” as answer. It is to be noted that “左” and “右” is usually associated with “的” and “边”.

Question 2B

For this task candidates were required to deal with vocabulary in context, through multiple-choice items. Most of the candidates had problems in choosing the right answers, hence they scored fewer marks.

The best done items were:

Item 1 爸爸的鞋子很脏了, 他要把它洗干净。

Item 3 姑姑病了, 我们明天要去看她。

Item 5 张华找不到他的笔了, 他要买一支新的。

The following items were found challenging:

Item 2 房子着火了, 请打电话给消防员。

Some candidates wrongly gave “做衣服的” or “木匠” as answer. Most candidates had problems in choosing the right answer. It seems that the students have a poor vocabulary. Teachers are advised to give more vocabulary exercises related to profession.

Item 4 我买了一件新衬衫, 我准备在婚礼上穿。Many candidates had difficulties to choose the right answer. Instead of choosing “衬衫”, they chose “包包”. Hence, they

could not score marks in this item. Teachers are advised to teach their students how to look up for key words in the sentence. Here the measure word “件” and the verb “穿” are key words which are helpful for choosing the right answer.

Question 3

Question 3 assesses the candidates’ ability to read with understanding at an intermediate level, in particular the ability to locate explicit information from the text. A satisfactory performance could be noted for this question. The passage set was about an essay competition notice. In this question, candidates were required to answer 10 questions of 1 mark each. Candidates are required to give answers drawn directly from the text provided. Most items were generally well answered by candidates; however, the following items were found to be challenging.

Item 1 这是什么比赛？

The expected answer was: 作文比赛。Some candidates wrongly gave “庆祝国庆节” or “国庆节”， hence they could not score any marks.

Item 2 为什么要组织比赛？ The expected answer was: 为了庆祝国庆节。

Some candidates wrongly provided “中山学校” as an answer. It seems that the candidates did not understand the meaning of “为了”， they just followed the structure of the question in the text and tried to deduce an answer.

Item 7 比赛几点开始？ The expected answer was: 十一点。

Some candidates gave “十一点到十二点” or “十二点” as answer.

Question 4

Question 4 was split into two parts: **4A** and **4B**.

This type of comprehension passage is of higher order compared to that of Question 3. Candidates’ ability in reading comprehension was assessed through their understanding of the extended passage. The narrative passage set was about a boy named Li Li who witnessed his grandmother’s mobile phone being snatched by two thieves who were on a motorcycle. Li Li followed the thieves till a house and saw where they placed his grandmother’s mobile phone. Then he rushed to the nearest police station to seek for help. Finally, the thieves were caught and Li Li’s grandmother got back her mobile phone.

Only a few candidates demonstrated excellent understanding of the passage and scored full marks. Many had problems in reading with understanding. Teachers should encourage pupils to read stories in the language.

Question 4A

Question 4A assesses candidates' ability to locate explicit information from the context through the multiple-choice items. It consists of 5 multiple-choice questions, carrying 1 mark each. Candidates performed satisfactorily.

The best done items were:

Item 1 李立每天都骑自行车上学。

Item 2 奶奶忘了她的篮子在桌子上。

Item 4 两个坏人把手机放到花瓶里。

The following items were found challenging:

Item 3 当李立看到奶奶摔倒在地上的时候，他把奶奶扶起来。

Some candidates wrongly gave “跟着两个坏人” as they did not read carefully. Some even gave “告诉警察” as an answer, as they did not understand the story. They just drew the information at the end of the text.

Item 5 故事中，李立是个聪明的男孩。Some candidates wrongly provided “懒的” or “贪心的” or “笨的” as answer. It seems that the candidates do not know the meaning of these words and they just chose an answer at random.

Question 4B

Question 4B tests candidates' ability in reading comprehension. It carries 10 marks. This extended reading comprehension task goes beyond literal understanding of a text and a range of reading comprehension skills are assessed. Candidates were required to identify central themes and ideas, infer the meaning of unfamiliar words, locate explicit information and provide a personal response. Performance has shown that in general candidates have not acquired these finer reading skills.

It was noted that some candidates were confused for questions which comprise of two parts (item 1 and 3). These candidates wrote both answers on the answer line (i). They should have split the answers and fill up the answer line (i) and (ii).

The following items were less well done.

Item 1 说一说坏人是怎样拿走奶奶的手机的。

The expected answers were: (i) 当他们到了奶奶身边的时候，一个坏人从摩托车上跳下来。(ii) 那个坏人很快地拿走了奶奶的手机。

Many candidates provided the two answers on the first answer line and left the second answer line empty. For them, there was only one answer as the two required elements were found in the same sentence.

Item 2 李立小心地跟在两个坏人后面。说一说他为什么要“小心地”。

The expected answer was: 因为他不要被两个坏人看到/发现。

This question was rather challenging as the candidates had to understand and formulate the answer themselves, as the answer cannot be inferred directly from the text. Some candidates answered by “因为他们走进了一个大屋子。” or “从大屋子的窗子后面看到他们把手机放到了花瓶里” hence they could not score any mark for this question.

Item 3 说一说警察是怎样帮助李立的。

The expected answers were:(i) 警察来到了坏人的屋子。(ii) 警察把坏人抓起来了。

We also accepted the answer “警察帮李立拿回奶奶的手机来。”

Many candidates gave “警察敲了门。” or “一个警察大声地问。” as answers, therefore they did not score good marks.

Item 5 按照故事情节的发展排列顺序。

The expected answer was:

- 1.李立非常生气
- 2.李立从窗子后面看
- 3.李立告诉警察放手机的地方
- 4.李立把手机还给奶奶

Some candidates could not put the sentences in a chronological order as they have not understood the full story. Hence, they could not score good marks.

Question 5

Question 5 was split into two parts: **5A** and **5B**.

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of grammar in writing at sentence level.

For question 5A, the candidates had to put the words in order to form a correct sentence. For question 5B, the candidates had to complete the given sentences. For question 5A, 50 candidates scored full marks and 86 candidates scored 2 marks. For question 5B, only 32 candidates scored full marks. Teachers are advised to practise more these two items to improve students' sentence writing skill.

Question 5A

In this question, the candidates required knowledge of syntax in writing the sentences through re-arranging jumbled words. As in the previous year, only a quarter of the candidates could score full marks. The influence of English or French syntax were visible in the question. This question carries 4 marks.

Item 1 The expected answer was: 明天可能会下大雨。/可能明天会下大雨。

Some candidates wrongly wrote : 可能明天会大雨下。/可能会下大雨明天。

Item 2 The expected answer was: 爸爸拍了很多照片。

Some candidates wrongly wrote : 爸爸拍很多照片了。/爸爸拍了照片很多。

Question 5B

This question also assessed candidates writing at sentence level. Knowledge of syntax was assessed through the sentence completion task. Only 32 candidates could attempt this question confidently. This question carries 6 marks.

Item 1 is to assess if the candidates could understand the meaning of “快要……了” which was given in the first part of the sentence. Most of the candidates did not understand that after “快要……了”，an immediate action which is related to the first part of the sentence should follow just after it. Some good answers given by candidates are: “快要上课了，我们进教室吧。” or “快要上课了，我们不要讲话了。”

Item 2 is to assess candidates using the associated-word “先……然后……” to complete the sentence. The first part of the sentence is given. Many candidates did not use “然后” in

the second part of the sentence. Some good answers given by candidates are: “马修先做作业，然后看电视。” or “马修先做作业，然后睡觉。” .

Item 3 is to assess whether the candidates could understand the meaning of “.....的时候” to be able to complete the sentence. Some candidates were unable to complete the sentence. Examples of wrong answers written by candidates are: “妈妈回家的时候，她做饭。” or “妈妈回家的时候，喝水。”

Question 6

The cloze-test is a higher order reading task assessing the use of language which requires the ability to rely on the context to guess the suitable word for filling the blanks. It aimed at assessing the candidates’ ability to read with understanding. Candidates had to fill in the blanks with appropriate words from the list of words given. It carries 10 marks. A few performed well.

This year, the passage set was based on the following story: “All children like their grandmother. I have the best grandmother in the world. She does not live with me but I think of everyday. I often write letters to her. I am happy to have her in my life as she is kind. She lives in a small house near the seaside. When I go to stay with her during the school holidays, she plays with me. She always cooks my favourite dishes. Every night, we look at her old pictures together. She tells me interesting stories when she was a child. I enjoy listening to the stories which grandmother tells me. I am sad when I have to go home.”

A good number of candidates did not earn full marks in this question. They lost marks because they could not fill in the words: “最好的”、“住在”、“屋子”、“学习” and “有意思的” in the appropriate blanks. However, many candidates could not differentiate between “写” and “做” .

Question 7A

This question assessed candidates’ ability to deal with spelling in context. Five short sentences containing spelling mistakes were set and candidates were required to correct these mistakes. Some candidates had problems in writing the right Chinese characters, hence they lost marks. This question carries 5 marks. A few successfully attempted the exercise.

The best done items were:

Item 1 他每天给妈妈打电话适（话）。

Item 4 妈妈买了三支（只）小鸡。

Item 5 哥哥没去边（过）中国。

The following items were found challenging:

Item 2 我们应该少吃肉多远（运）动。Some candidates did not understand the meaning of the sentence at all.

Item 3 爸爸星期天在家体（休）息。The same as item 2, many candidates did not understand the meaning of “休息”.

Question 7B

This question assessed candidates' ability to write the appropriate Chinese character according to the provided Chinese pinyin in the given context. Some candidates demonstrated excellent understanding of the sentences. This question carries 5 marks. Around one quarter of the candidates got 3 to 5 items correct.

The well-done items were:

Item 2 春节的时候我们玩得很开心（xīn）。

Item 4 我们每天要多喝水（shuǐ）。

Item 5 饭前我们要先洗手（shǒu）。

The following items were found challenging:

Item 1 姐姐每天下午三点放（fàng）学。Some candidates could not differentiate between “方” and “放” and wrongly gave “方” as answer, hence they lost marks.

Item 3 大家要注意安全（quán）。Some candidates did not understand the meaning of the sentence, all these students lost marks.

Question 8

This question assesses the candidates' ability to write grammatically correct and meaningful sentences based on pictures and five given pairs of words. The different sentences should be linked together with the given words to make up a coherent short story. This question carries 10 marks. There were 91 candidates who got (6-10) marks.

A number of issues were noted:

- In some cases, candidates wrote sentences by adding only a Personal Pronouns or a Verb.
- Some candidates did not understand the given pair of words in item 3 “不小心----摔倒” and item 4 “这时----帮助”, therefore they were unable to write a correct sentence.
- Some candidates could not use “感谢” properly.

Item 1 一天早上----- 商店

This was the best done item in Question 8. Candidates produced simple sentences such as

一天早上，妈妈去商店买菜。

一天早上，奶奶去商店买东西。

Nevertheless, some issues related to grammar and syntax were noted. In several cases, candidates produced flawed sentences such as:

妈妈一天早上商店买菜。

一天早上妹妹买商店。

Item 2 不久 ----- 回家

This item was also well done in Question 8. Candidates produced simple sentences such as:

不久，妈妈买好了菜回家。

不久，奶奶就回家了。

But here also some issues pertaining to grammar were noted, for example:

她不久是回家。

不久她去回家。

Item 3 不小心 ----- 摔倒

This item posed difficulty to some candidates as they did not understand the meaning of “摔倒” hence they could not write good sentences and lost marks. Some candidates produced good sentences such as:

一不小心，她摔倒了。

因为不小心，奶奶摔倒了。

There were also many sentences containing syntax errors:

她不小心因为摔倒了。

不小心因为奶奶摔倒了。

There were also some candidates who wrote the sentences by adding a personal pronoun.

For example:

不小心，妈妈摔倒。

不小心，奶奶摔倒。

Item 4 这时 ----- 帮助

This item was also well done in Question 8. Candidates produced a variety of correct sentences such as:

这时，一位过路的好心人帮助了她。

这时，一个人看到了，他就去帮助奶奶。

There were also many sentences containing syntax errors:

这时我会去帮助她。

这时哥哥帮助。

Item 5 最后 ----- 感谢

This item posed some difficulty to candidates. They had to struggle to find the right vocabulary for writing the grammatically correct sentences. Some candidates produced good sentences such as:

最后他们回家，奶奶很感谢他。

最后，妈妈很感谢李立。

In some cases, candidates did not use “感谢” properly, they produced some sentences such as:

最后他们感谢回家。

最后我的奶奶感谢。

Question 9

This question tests the ability of candidates to write a coherent piece of continuous prose of about 100 words based on a given canvas. It assesses higher order writing skills, especially, candidates' ability to develop a given storyline creatively and coherently, use accurate grammar to express themselves, their ability to use varied sentence structures and the richness and appropriateness of the vocabulary used. This question carries 10 marks.

The following prompts had been given to guide the candidates:

- 在海边
- 孩子们在水里玩
- 一个孩子喊救命
- 怎么办
- 最后……

Performance on this question was, on the whole, below expectations. Some candidates indeed produced good pieces of writing in a satisfactory way. There were only 46 candidates who got (5-10) marks. A good number of below average candidates did not attempt this question and did not score any mark, the majority of their compositions were full of grammatical errors. Inappropriate use of case-endings, wrong words, inappropriate verb-tense usage and sentence writing were noted. This showed that candidates had not mastered the skills for writing an essay.

The following sample of compositions is an illustration of the strengths and weaknesses encountered by candidates.

Composition 1 (9—10 分)

上个星期五，天气好极了，风和日丽，阳光明媚，我和家人去海边玩。在海边，孩子们在水里玩。突然，我听到一个孩子喊救命，我就跳到海里去救他。救上来了，他的爸爸和妈妈对我说：“谢谢你救了我们的儿子！”我说：“不用谢。”回到家，我高兴地跟爸爸妈妈说了这件事，因为我觉得帮助人是很开心的事。

This composition is a good piece of work. The candidate made a noticeable attempt to develop the storyline. The grammar and overall Chinese expression are good. The vocabulary is wide and precise. The sentence structures are varied. This demonstrates the candidate's skill to use different lengths and types of sentences for particular effects.

Composition 2 (7—8 分)

今天，我和爸爸、妈妈一起去海边玩。在海边，我玩的很开心，但是我好像听到一个孩子在喊救命。我看声音来的地方，果然有一个小孩。我很担心他，但是我不会游泳，所以我就跟我的爸爸妈妈讲了，爸爸二话不说就去把他抱上来。过了一会儿，他的父母来了，他们非常感谢我们。我很开心。

This composition is relevant to the theme set in the examination paper. The writer has described what happened while he heard a voice “help!” from somewhere. He was able to express himself when he saw a boy who was in danger. Sentences show some variation in length and style, including the confident use of good vocabulary “好像”、“果然”、“二话不说” and “抱上来”. However, a few errors were noticeable.

Composition 3 (5—6 分)

今天是五月十五日星期六，我和我的家人一起去海边玩。在海边，孩子们在水里玩。十五分钟后，妈妈说：“一个还在喊救命，他是李立。”我们在水上帮助他。他不舒服。我们去医院。回到家的时候，李立说：“我不喜欢去海边，我们不去海边。”妈妈说：“我也不喜欢去海边。我们以后不去了。”

From this composition, we could see that the candidate made a noticeable attempt to develop the storyline. The story is organised and contains enough relevant details. A variety of simple and complex sentences were used. However, a few grammatical and spelling mistakes were identified.

Composition 4 (3—4 分)

星期六，我在海边。我去看我的孩子们。他们在水里玩。我到了的时候一个孩子，莎莎摔倒喊救命。我们帮助她。她去看一个医生。我们都很担心。最后莎莎来，我们都很高兴。

This composition is incomplete. In fact, the story is a basic one with little development. It contains many grammatical mistakes. The sentence structures are very simple and lacks fluency.

Composition 5 (1—2 分)

今天我在海边。孩子们在水里玩。孩子们是高兴。一个还在喊救命。他吃饭前去水里。最后李立去在水里和孩子们是不喊救命。他去到医生。我们去家和我们很高兴。

This composition can be categorised as very basic story with very little development. The vocabulary used are simple and inaccurate. Many grammatical mistakes have been noticed throughout the story. A few sentences are meaningless.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations can improve the teaching of Modern Chinese as a foreign language to Mauritian students in primary schools:

1. Teachers should create a better learning environment in classrooms by making use of blended-learning methodology and interactive strategies.
2. The use of other languages like English, French and Creole should be avoided as far as possible while teaching Chinese.
3. More emphasis should be laid on vocabulary, grammar, and the application in sentence writing.
4. Students should be motivated to develop their listening and speaking skills by communicating in the Chinese language.

Conclusion

Most of the candidates did not have a basic knowledge of the Chinese Language. With regards to this, teachers should make an investigation into its causes in order to adopt proper teaching and learning methods. This is the only way to enhance pupils' interest and improve performance.