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FOREIGN LANGUAGE ITALIAN

Paper 0535/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

This paper aims to test candidates' ability to understand written Italian and to communicate in writing. Candidates were required to read material in Italian and to convey information by responding to a range of questions either by ticking the appropriate box or by expressing answers in their own words. They were also required to write a letter of about 80-100 words describing their home town/village. As in previous years, the standard of work was generally excellent, with few exceptions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This was a multiple choice exercise. The majority of candidates answered most of the questions correctly. Occasionally **Question 3** was answered with B (*Libreria*) instead of C (*Biblioteca*) because of the common confusion between the English word 'library' and the Italian *libreria*. Mistakes also occurred occasionally in **Question 5** as some candidates did not recognise the meaning of *benzina* or did not associate it with *distributore*.

The correct answers were:

Question 1: A

Question 2: D

Question 3: C

Question 4: B

Question 5: C.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

In this exercise, based on a short text, candidates had to identify whether statements were True or False. This, again, did not seem to present any particular difficulty for candidates, but when errors occurred, it was mostly in reply to **Questions 7 and 10**.

The correct answers were:

Question 6: Vero

Question 7: Vero

Question 8: Falso

Question 9: Falso

Question 10: Falso.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Candidates had to tick the appropriate box in order to identify to which *agriturismo* (*Il Cipressino, La Fattoria* or *Il Poggio*) a list of statements referred. Many candidates scored full marks on this exercise, but **Questions 12** and **14** were sometimes answered incorrectly. This was probably due to candidates not understanding the term *nei dintorni* and therefore not realising that *La Fattoria* did not actually have a restaurant in **Question 12**; and not making the connection between *trekking* and *lunghe passeggiate a piedi* in **Question 14**.

The correct answers were:

Question 11: P

Question 12: F

Question 13: F

Question 14: C

Question 15: C.

Exercise 4 Question 16

In this exercise, based on three written specifications and two visual stimuli, candidates had to write a message about themselves for an Italian girl. They had to include: **(a)** their age; **(b)** the languages they knew and **(c)** their favourite activities (skiing and playing tennis).

Candidates were required to cover all three elements, and linguistic accuracy was not essential, unless inaccuracies impeded communication.

The question was tackled consistently and most candidates gained full marks in this exercise.

Section 2**Exercise 1 Questions 17-24**

In this exercise, candidates had to answer questions relating to a passage about a cat that was scared when men from a removal company came to its house to collect a piano belonging to its owners. It ended up in the company's van, travelled 200 km away from home, but managed to return all by itself after one and a half years.

Most candidates handled this exercise very well indeed and no question presented any particular difficulties.

The correct answers were as follows:

Question 17: *di persone che hanno trovato gatti sperduti e li hanno portati a casa*

Question 18: *per esaminare il suo pianoforte*

Question 19: *paura*

Question 20: *scappa fuori di casa*

Question 21: *perchè il camion parte/perchè sale su un camion che lo porta lontano*

Question 22: (Any 2 of): *lo cercano/mettono avvisi sui giornali/foto nei negozi e sui muri*

Question 23: *perchè capiscono che è andato a finire sul camion/perchè è passato troppo tempo*

Question 24: (Any 2 of) *perchè è riuscito a tornare a casa/ha percorso 200 km/perchè è tornato dopo tanto tempo/perchè dimostra che anche i gatti si affezionano ai padroni.*

Exercise 2 Question 25

In this exercise, candidates had to write a letter, talking about the place where they live and including the following points:

- (a) Where their town (or village) is and what type of town or village it is.
- (b) What they like most about their town or village and why.
- (c) What do they not like and what they would like to change.

The letter was generally quite well written by most candidates. A few candidates lost marks through the omission of one element of the task, mainly what they would like to change about their town or village. A good proportion of candidates were able to set out the letter correctly and scored good marks for communication. There were a number of well developed letters which displayed a confident use of structures and a good range of vocabulary.

Section 3**Exercise 1 Questions 26-31**

This reading comprehension exercise required candidates to answer multiple choice questions based on a passage about the circus. The final question (for 2 marks) required an answer in the candidate's own words.

The final section of the question paper is aimed at grades A*-B and, as intended, candidates found this exercise more challenging than exercises in **Sections 1** and **2**.

The correct answers were:

Question 26: D

Question 27: C

Question 28: C

Question 29: A

Question 30: B

Question 31: *per portare un po' di allegria dovunque e forse anche per un lavoro futuro.*

Exercise 2 Questions 32-38

This exercise was based on an article called *Mamme e tate* about children and babies in Italy who are left for too long with childminders or baby-sitters. On the whole, candidates found the text accessible and there were many very strong performances. **Question 32** caused some problems for candidates who did not include the reference to statistics required for the second mark, but simply stated *le mamme ritornano presto alla loro professione*. For **Question 33**, a number of candidates included *le mamme delle categorie sociali medie* and *le mamme delle categorie sociali alte* as separate points and thus missed out on one of the available marks.

The correct answers were:

Question 32: (i) *I bambini passano più tempo con la tata che con la mamma, (ii) il 20% dei bambini viene affidato alla baby-sitter*

Question 33 (i) *sono mamme che lavorano/sono professioniste, (ii) appartengono alle categorie sociali medie e alte*

Question 34: (i) *se parlano poco, (ii) se lasciano il bambino per troppo tempo davanti alla TV*

Question 35: *I bambini affidati alle babysitter sono più influenzati dalla pubblicità*

Question 36: (i) *deve avere conoscenze di pronto soccorso/sapere cosa fare in caso di incidenti, (ii) deve parlare abbastanza bene l'italiano*

Question 37: (i) *le madri europee passano meno tempo con i figli delle madri italiane, (ii) i padri europei passano più tempo con i figli di quelli italiani*

Question 38: (i) *devono compensare le loro assenze con l'affetto, (ii) devono capire che i loro bambini hanno una diversa nozione del tempo.*

<p>Paper 0535/03</p>

<p>Speaking</p>

General comments

Once again, Moderators were impressed with the quality of the work produced by candidates. They entered into the spirit of the role plays and performed their tasks with confidence. Topics had been prepared and were presented effectively and, in the final section, candidates engaged in natural conversations with their Examiners on a variety of everyday topics. Only occasionally did communication become difficult.

Examiners created a friendly atmosphere and were able to put candidates at their ease. They aimed to extend candidates as far as possible, encouraging them to use a variety of grammatical structures, including past and future tenses. Most Examiners were well prepared for the role plays and productive and well-focused questioning in the conversation sections enabled candidates to show what they knew and could do.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays A and B

This section of the examination tests how well a candidate can deal with two guided conversations in Italian, for which s/he has 15 minutes to prepare. For each task a mark ranging from 0 (for an unintelligible utterance) to 3 (for an accurate utterance, expressed in the appropriate register) can be scored. The situations in the A Role Plays, drawn from a well-defined range of topics, required familiarity with the minimum core vocabulary only. The situations in the B Role Plays, on the other hand, were slightly more complex and required a wider range of vocabulary. Most candidates gave relevant and correct answers, achieving the highest marks in both role plays, but lower marks were also awarded, often when a task consisted of two elements, one of which was overlooked by the candidate. In general, preparation of the role plays by Examiners had improved, and candidates coped better than last year. Some Examiners, however, either anticipated the reply their candidates were supposed to give, or moved on too quickly and did not allow them to complete all elements of a task, in both cases denying candidates the opportunity to work for the marks available. Once again, it should be stressed that the Examiner's role is crucial in the Speaking test and that a well-prepared Examiner is in the best position to ensure that candidates perform to the best of their ability.

It was pleasing to note that virtually all Examiners followed instructions and identified which role play card was being used.

Topic (prepared) Conversation

In this section of the test, up to 15 marks are awarded for 'comprehension and responsiveness' (scale (a), which also takes into account how well a topic has been prepared), and up to 15 marks for 'linguistic complexity and range' (scale (b)). In general, marks for comprehension and fluency of response were higher than marks for vocabulary and accuracy, but only slightly. Most candidates had prepared well for this test and presented a variety of topics in which they had a personal interest. The subjects chosen most often were various sports, such as football, skiing, horse riding, sailing, and even the martial art of Wu Shu. It was pleasing to hear the genuine interest and passion for the topics chosen. The angle from which the topics were presented was often interesting, and sometimes fairly technical. Travel, tourism and hobbies were also widely chosen. One candidate chose to talk in great detail about Benigni's film *La vita è bella*, another about a recent book by Sierra y Fabra, *Un hombre con un tenedor en una tierra de sopas*, while another presentation was on Italian cars, from Fiat to Maserati. A sign of the times: terrorism was also chosen by a few candidates, some with direct reference to the recent attack in Madrid.

This year, the timing of the presentation and the ensuing conversation (5 minutes in all) was closer than last year to the stated requirements. Examiners, however, are reminded that they should allow candidates to present their topic for a full minute without interruptions. Only then should questions be asked. In a small number of cases, Examiners fired off questions straightaway preventing the candidate from making any kind of presentation. In the conversation, which should last about 4 minutes, most candidates showed a good level of comprehension and responded fluently. Most Examiners were able to lead their candidates into using a variety of time frames and asked for explanations, enlargements, descriptions, relating to the topic, thus helping candidates to show their full linguistic ability. Indeed it is important to stress that over-use of closed questions, resulting in just one word answers, must be avoided, and a conscious effort made to use the 'Tell me about/Why/How' type of questions. Overall, the assessment of candidates was fairly close to the agreed standard though there was a tendency to be slightly (or rather) harsh, especially in respect of scale (b) (linguistic complexity and range). Occasionally, Examiners were rather generous with candidates at the bottom of the range.

General (unprepared) Conversation

This test is assessed in the same way as the Topic Conversation, with up to 15 marks available for 'comprehension and responsiveness' and up to 15 marks for 'linguistic complexity and range'. Questions were usually centred on well known topics, such as family, school, free time, recent or future holidays, plans for the future, etc. Most candidates responded without difficulty, both in terms of grammatical structures and of fluency. Here again it was important that Examiners adhered to the recommended time (5 minutes) and varied the questions, covering more than one topic and remembering that the purpose of the conversation was to allow candidates to display their linguistic ability. Occasional mistakes did not substantially affect marks, which were usually in line with, or just slightly below, those awarded for the Topic Conversation.

An Impression mark out of 10 is also awarded for the candidate's pronunciation and intonation, as well as fluency of delivery. In a few cases, delivery was slow and laboured and pronunciation/intonation showed a certain amount of interference from the candidate's mother-tongue, but the majority of candidates displayed good control of Italian sounds and accurate intonation and were awarded marks of 8-10.

Paper 0535/04

Continuous Writing

General comments

The aim of this paper is to test candidates' ability to write a piece of prose relevantly and correctly. Each of the two exercises is assessed for communication (5 marks), accuracy in the use of structures (15 marks) and impression (5 marks). The mark awarded for communication reflects how well the candidate has completed the task (whether s/he has followed the instructions given and how fully the various points have been developed). Accuracy is assessed on the basis of an evaluation of correct grammatical structures and quality of language. The impression mark is awarded for fluency, degree of judgement or opinion and variety of expression.

As in previous years, linguistic standards varied, but generally speaking the level of work was high and most candidates were able to compose their letters correctly and respond fully to the tasks set. A number of candidates were awarded full marks in both parts of the paper (50 out of 50) as their compositions were fully developed and clearly written with excellent use of language. In general, candidates followed the guidelines accurately and covered all the required elements.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

There was a choice between:

- (a) Writing a letter to an Italian friend to tell him/her that two weeks ago you had a problem with a friend. The points to include were:
- What the problem was
 - Why you disagreed with your friend
 - What the consequences were
 - Your thoughts after this experience

or

- (b) Writing a letter to an Italian friend, telling him/her that last year you had a success at school. Candidates had to include:
- Details of the success
 - What difficulties they had to overcome
 - How they overcame them
 - What their thoughts and emotions were

Candidates chose both options in equal numbers. The results in general were good and there were a significant number of excellent scripts with an impressive level of accuracy, including complex structures such as the conditional or the subjunctive.

As usual, the more able candidates made good use of the stimulus given to produce a thoughtful account, including opinion and reason as well as descriptions. Many produced convincing responses and made up interesting stories about the problems they had with their friends, ranging over disagreements about certain issues, or lying to parents, or quarrels about boyfriend/girlfriend situations. Only a few did not seem to understand that the problem was supposed to be some form of disagreement with a friend and that they had to write a letter to another friend to explain what this disagreement was about. The second letter covered successes in areas such as end of year exams, swimming or running races, and various competitions.

As regards accuracy, it is difficult to generalise about different candidates' achievements. Problems with verb endings and agreements were the most common cause of errors, but a good number of scripts were certainly adequate and some, as already mentioned, were excellent.

Question 2

In this exercise, candidates had to write a story based on the preamble 'Last Saturday you were at home alone. Suddenly you heard a noise.' They had to include the following points:

- What happened next
- Their reactions to this experience

Again, many candidates performed very well and a considerable number gained full marks. The vast majority talked about a noise produced by an animal in the house (cat, dog) which obviously scared them greatly at the time and left them resolved never to stay alone in the house again in the evening. A few came up with other suggestions, such as burglars or a brother/sister who wanted to play a trick on them or even their own parents who had forgotten something behind and had come home to collect it. The stories were interesting to read and, in the best cases, even conveyed an atmosphere of suspense and tension.

Only a couple of candidates did not understand the wording of the question (perhaps they did not recognise the word *rumore*) and produced irrelevant answers.