

Italian (continuers)

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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SACE
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ITALIAN (CONTINUERS)

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OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Interaction

The stronger interactions were interviews/conversations with the teacher which reflected genuine interaction. Some interactions were more rightly oral presentations with one or two questions asked by the teacher at the end. If a student chooses to undertake a more 'presentation' type approach, the teacher should ensure that more opportunity is given by asking questions, or making comments, to introduce a character of conversation that requires the student to attempt a freer response, more spontaneous and appropriate to interaction.

While teachers may practise the conversation format and questions to be expected at the external oral examination, students benefit from more varied approaches to the interaction assessment task. Some interesting and successful interactions came from a task in which the student was trying to 'sell' a product to the teacher and another where the discussion centred on significant childhood memories. The school assessment component provides an opportunity for students to show evidence of learning in a situation different to that of the oral examination in the external assessment.

Text production

Teachers chose text types for tasks such as brochures and pamphlets which were well-handled by students. Teachers set a variety of tasks which allowed the students to produce an imaginative response by using films, short stories and articles from different media on current issues, for the basis of a response.

Text Analysis

A text analysis is the most appropriate assessment to demonstrate analysis of language, interpretation and reflection. Many teachers provided a variety of contemporary tasks derived from a variety of media while some continued to make use of past external examination texts and papers. While this is valid as practice for the external examination, students could benefit from a wider range of texts, range of topic and vocabulary and types of questions.

The process of moderation was helped by the teachers who included their assessments in marks or grades, denoting how they arrived at the overall grade for the assessment type.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

There were many interesting topics chosen and these were usually of a more specific nature. Individual topics for students seem to work best because the students can choose topics based on their personal interests and strengths. It also lessens the chance of inappropriately sharing information and the problems and difficulties associated with this approach.

It is important that the Oral Presentation and the Written Response in Italian only overlap slightly in information provided. They need to be two distinctly different pieces. All three assessment tasks should be different in context, audience and purpose. Students are aided in keeping the assessment responses they produce distinctly different from one another when different specific task types are used for each of the three responses. An example of a topic which was handled well by a student was the topic of sweets, '*dolci*'. For the written response in Italian, this topic was presented as an article on regional desserts for a travel magazine, and the oral presentation dealt with the desserts unique to Italian festivals and religious celebrations.

The higher achieving students included more evidence of research in the three tasks, while the weaker responses often repeated information across the tasks.

Many teachers encourage their students to use cue cards as prompts for the Oral Presentation in Italian. The more successful students are very well prepared and acquainted with the information and material they present, and hence their cue cards have very few key words, topic titles or main points and are used sparingly. PowerPoint presentations need to have minimum words: like running sheets or cue cards with too many words or the whole 'speech', a reading of a script is not appropriate.

The Reflective Response in English was of a higher quality overall this year, however, many students still reflected primarily on the process of their research. The Reflective Response in English should be a personal reflection on the research undertaken and the information and learning which has come of these and how the student has been able to think about his understanding of culture and cultures, values, his/her learning, beliefs, and ideas. How has the student been challenged, changed, confirmed, in his/her beliefs, ideas, thinking by the research? This is not a response describing the process undertaken in research but a reflection on how the information and learning that resulted from the research learning has been incorporated into the student's knowledge through thought and reflection. The more able students, reflecting on how the research has deepened their learning and knowledge, their understanding of the values, practices, and beliefs of the Italian culture, gave brief, specific references or examples from their findings to back up their comments.

Some students chose to use blogs for the Reflective Response in English, a text type which worked quite well giving the student the opportunity to discuss the material /information collected, and to discuss the learning, thought and reflection in a personal way.

General Comments

When the word count (for a text produced) or the time length (of oral presentations or interactions) is indicated in the subject outline, these should be adhered. Falling short of the expected word count or time length, may not provide the student with opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Exceeding the word or time limit should be avoided, as the additional work cannot be assessed or considered at moderation.

Teachers are urged to ensure that the tasks provide students with the opportunity to perform in the specific features of the assessment design criteria.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

ORAL EXAMINATION

Generally those students that had practised and were comfortable with their topic could participate and engage more confidently in the conversation and the discussion of the In-depth Study. In the Conversation, examiners commented that some students were incredibly nervous and this no doubt affected their performance. Responses were a little rehearsed but students were still successful.

Conversation

Generally students were able to handle most questions and use grammar and sentence structure correctly. Most felt comfortable beginning their conversation and could speak well on familiar topics. Examiners commented that it was a positive experience to hear students speak with such confidence. Most students were able to elaborate and give detailed responses without too much prompting. Some were even able to use humour effectively.

Discussion

The Discussion of the In-Depth Study is generally challenging, however students demonstrated genuine enthusiasm and good knowledge of their chosen topic. Students and teachers need to work closely together so that topics and texts selected are suitable and facilitate deep learning. It was felt that students needed to be better prepared to discuss the texts used in more detail. It was noted that a few students seemed to not use any resources in Italian, which is a requirement of the subject outline.

Examiners felt that while most topics were suitable, some, such as Italian cooking were very broad and did not allow students the depth of research for this section. Some topics were treated more like projects rather than research requiring analysis and personal reflection.

Overall, most students were able to engage the examiners and speak in general. Some recurring grammatical errors included:

- non complex tenses
- conjunctions
- *passato prossimo*
- position of '*anche*' when speaking.

There was also a lack of idiomatic expressions and evidence of a little English infiltrating the conversation and discussion.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

SECTION 1: LISTENING AND RESPONDING

For this section, 72% of students scored 11 out of 20 or better.

Out of the 5 texts, text 5 proved to be the most challenging, while responses for the other texts reflected a sound understanding of most ideas and topics represented.

Text 1

This advertisement on couch surfing was short but highlighted a 'phenomenon' with which students may not have been familiar: there is a network of volunteers who offer their 'couch' for accommodation 'in their very own homes' and there are many available sites in this new global community for travellers. While most students were able to ascertain that you can meet lots of people, make new friends and see interesting places, only some were able to explain the idea of volunteers around the world offering their couch for free accommodation to travellers. 'From the comfort of their own home' was incorrectly used to explain '*offre ospitalità nella propria casa*' and some students wrote that couch surfing meant using the internet from the comfort of their own couch to visit places and make new friends.

Text 2

Text 2 presented a cooking program 'Italian Flavours' with chef Roberto. Roberto chose the 'pizza rustica' recipe because it is healthy and above all, traditional. A number of responses highlighted that it was easy but there was an emphasis on the 'even if it is easy, it is good for one's health and above all, traditional'. Some students offered extra information: that the fresh ingredients can be cooked in a way that they do not lose their vitamins and minerals. In question 2(c), some students confused the 'presenter' with the guest chef and consequently, some wrote that 'he' had tried the dish before. The female presenter has not tried the dish before as she states '*Che sorpresa!*' (What a surprise! Who would have thought it would be so tasty!). Most students were able to answer questions about text 2 in an accurate way.

Text 3

In this text, a message left on an answering machine, the answers to part (a) were varied but most students understood that the caller was an exchange student '*sono Marisa, la studentessa di scambio*', contacting her host family to let them know that she had received their email and photos and was looking forward to the exchange. Others mistakenly thought that the girl had sent the photos and the letter/email or that she was looking for a family to host her. Very few students were able to apply the phrase '*mi troverò bene con voi*' (I will be happy with you/ I will feel comfortable with you) to their answer. In part (b) many were able to detail accurately most of the things she was looking forward to. Many students scored full marks for this question.

Text 4

Text 4 was a radio interview discussing the problems/concerns created by the birth of social networks. Most students were able to state the purpose of this interview in an accurate way. In part (b), the concerns expressed by Professor Sansoni were outlined well by the majority of students. The more discerning students were able to include two of the three points, scoring full marks for this part. Some students,

however, relied on their general knowledge of social networks rather than on evidence from the text and consequently some answers were not relevant. Most candidates were able to correctly ascertain for part (c) that the positive aspect of this new way of communicating highlighted by Professor Sansoni is that it is quicker and easier to stay in contact with friends and places of work. It was encouraging to see detailed and accurate answers for this text.

Text 5

Text 5 was the most challenging in the Listening and Responding section, with a number of candidates struggling to answer the questions and understand the text. The telephone conversation is between Chiara and her Uncle Carlo. In part (a) he contacts his niece to tell her about a job he saw advertised on a particular site that might interest her/that might be suitable for her. They are looking for an Economics graduate. Some students were able to detail this clearly while others found it difficult to get the gist of the conversation.

In part (b)(i) many students were able to answer accurately that she is disappointed because the job is only for 6 months with some also stating that she would like a permanent position, or that she feels that the government should do something to reduce the number of temporary workers. Part (b)(ii) 'How does Carlo respond to Chiara's disappointment?' was answered in a variety of ways depending on whether the text was understood. Carlo points out to Chiara that his job, although permanent, is always under threat ('You never know what could happen...I could be made redundant'). Students needed to provide text evidence to score 2 marks and some were very successful.

The difficulty for most students in this text was that the information needed to answer the questions was not presented sequentially. They had to hear all of Carlo's responses before they could answer them accurately and this sometimes caused confusion.

In response to the last question, most students translated the word '*Coraggio!*' to mean 'courage' without referring to the context in which it was said and consequently did not score the mark assigned to this question. Carlo uses this word to encourage Chiara to apply for this job as she has 'nothing to lose' (*niente da perdere*). In this section of the written examination the more successful students were able to understand the ideas of each text, synthesize the information and respond in an accurate way, using text evidence to support their answers.

SECTION 2: READING AND RESPONDING PART A

General comments

All students attempted all questions. The most capable students read the questions carefully and chose the most suitable textual evidence to support their answers. Students are reminded to consult their dictionary with care and to select translations that are appropriate for the context of the reading passage.

Text 6

Question 6 (a) – This question posed some difficulties for students as it asked them to infer who would benefit from reading this article, rather than those who would simply find it interesting. Therefore, successful students identified who would be able to use the information provided for their own benefit, e.g. people interested in setting up an online business, or those who already had one to see where the trends were. Students also needed to support their answer with evidence from the text e.g. that

the article described the online shopping habits of the different demographics using online shopping.

Question 6(b) – This was an information extraction question which many students did well. There were three distinct groups mentioned in the article based on gender, age and location. The expression *giochi d'azzardo* caused some confusion with students translating it as 'dangerous' or 'hazardous' games, although many were able to work out that 'games of chance' would correctly signify online gambling.

Question 6(c) – Many students came up with interesting and viable titles for their articles, such as *I soldi che spendiamo online*, *L'internet: il nuovo negozio?*, *La rivoluzione dello shopping online* or *Shopping online – un vero successo*. However, some students neglected to justify their choice by giving an overall picture of what the article was about. Some students also chose negative titles, which contradicted the positive view of the success of online shopping despite the difficult economic times in Italy.

Text 7

Question 7(a) – Many students answered this question well by correctly identifying the different language techniques used by each author, and the contrasting effect each produced. Text 6 was an objective article written for a wide audience. The language was factual and the third person perspective was used, along with credible evidence such as statistics to present the facts about online shopping. In contrast, Text 7 was written as a personal letter, written in the first person perspective, to show how online shopping has affected an individual. The language used was much more emotive, including expressions such as 'sick and tired', 'I can't believe we don't want the personal touch when shopping', 'I beg you to consider your local stores/store owners' and 'think about it carefully'. By directly addressing the audience and appealing to them to help support local businesses, the letter is much more subjective.

Question 7(b) – The final question asked students to compare the advantages of online and traditional shopping which was generally done quite well. A number of students translated 'compare goods and services' as 'confront' prices. Students need to choose the best translation within the context, rather than take the first option.

SECTION 2: READING AND RESPONDING PART B

Students were required to respond to a blog which addressed many key items that students deal with on a daily basis. Most students did not agree with the blog and many used their response as an opportunity to discuss the benefits of part time work in general.

Very few responses were set out as a blog, however and the depth and breadth of treatment of the topic was very basic. Generally students organised their ideas and information in the order they read it in the text, addressing this in individual paragraphs. Not many students were able to give elaborated responses. Most students understood the purpose of the text and were able to express opinions, however few engaged the audience.

Expression as a whole was varied. While many students were able to use subjunctives well, others were unable to use non + verb, correct definite articles, and at times struggled conjugating the present tense.

SECTION 3: WRITING IN ITALIAN

Of the students who sat the exam, 61 % chose Question 9, 23 % chose Question 10 and 16% chose Question 11.

Overall students coped quite well with this section of the written examination. Most students were able to adhere to all requirements of the task competently. Some students struggled with the language and structural requirements of writing in Italian.

Students' pieces of writing were generally relevant with differing degrees of fluency. In particular Questions 9 and 10 reflected better ideas and were better handled in conveying appropriate detail, information, opinions and creating interest and engaging the audience. Question 11 often did not appear relevant to context – while pieces created some interest in engaging audience, they needed to adhere to context and purpose. Higher level of engagement and language use was found in Question 9 responses followed by Question 10 and then Question 11. Question 11 yielded a variety of responses that tended not to follow the conventions of the text type.

Students expressed their language skills in a fluent, mostly accurate and cohesive manner. However, some responses struggled with tenses, variety of expressions and cohesive ideas and devices. Pleasingly, many students endeavoured to incorporate cultural appropriateness to their piece of writing. Some students did not provide much depth, however, and relied on familiar phrases, repetition and simplistic ideas, information and opinions.

Generally, organisation of information and ideas was adhered to in an adequate manner, however a number of students faltered in the use of conventions of text types, particularly with the letter for Question 9.

There were common errors in punctuation and with auxiliary verbs. Students are reminded that proper nouns (including names of cities) should have a capital letter. In spite of this, Question 9 allowed for creativity which was well managed by students, who showed a good understanding of Italy and Italy's tourist locations.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Task sheets should provide specific instructions. These task sheets should be included in moderation materials to show the assessment design criteria the task aims to assess.

Please ensure that recordings are audible and clear and that if the same disc is used for several students, that these are clearly marked and distinguished.

Teachers are requested not to use plastic sleeves for every task but rather place the Assessment Type 1 and Assessment Type 2 task responses in two separately affixed bundles per student and place them in the one clear plastic bag sent by the SACE Board.

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