



**2003**

**LOTE: Serbian GA 3: Examination**

## **Oral component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Students were well prepared for the first part – general conversation and areas covered were: school, family, friends, hobbies and interests and future aspirations.

For the second part, discussion, students prepared two topics: a historical topic, the battle of Kosovo in 1389, and sub-topics related to the event and a literary topic – a sociological topic discussing the role of men and women in Serbian society in the past and today as seen through literature, film or magazine or newspapers articles as well as through real life stories.

In terms of overall performance, well-prepared students showed their willingness to extend their vocabulary, to learn more and to share their knowledge with the assessor/s. They used gap-filling strategies successfully, built on comments made by the assessor/s, and used repair strategies when needed. Those who were less successful showed that speaking Serbian does not mean that they speak it correctly as some of them used lots of colloquialisms and their lack of knowledge in terms of grammar showed their inability to produce correct sentences in Serbian. Students need to prepare for the examination and not expect a natural flow of sentences based upon their use of the language in everyday situations.

It is advisable that more themes for the Detailed Study be considered for the next year oral examination.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – General conversation**

Most students were well prepared and talked about their families, friends, school, future, hobbies and interests. They were most keen to talk about their interests and hobbies and their future aspirations.

Well-prepared students were able to talk about any area of general conversation. They connected well with the assessor/s, used appropriate and rich vocabulary to describe their activities and accurate grammar with little or no need for self-correction. They moved the conversation forward, were interesting and showed interest and pride in their achievements and the praise they were given by their parents or peers.

However, students who presented with little or no preparation, hoping their fluency would help them out found the first seven minutes very long due to the fact that they talked too quickly and were unable to add any additional information in order to sustain the conversation. They also tried to hesitate with their answers, hoping to buy time.

Less able students showed gaps in their knowledge of grammar and especially usage of cases, which is crucial when speaking in Serbian. For some this happened because they did not use Serbian extensively at home or had difficulties as they used Serbian dialects (some of which are characterised by the omission of cases, which is deemed as irregular and sub-standard language). Teachers have to work with those students, preparing more grammar-based exercises and pronunciation exercises to teach them how to use seven cases in Serbian.

#### **Section 2 – Discussion**

##### **Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively**

Many students came well prepared and showed understanding of their chosen topic by clearly stating the theme, topic and sub-topic of their Detailed Study as well as resources used. Their choice showed their inclination and interest for either the historical topic – battle of Kosovo in 1389, which is more precise, or the broader and more open to discussion, the role of men and women in Serbian society. Choosing a historical theme – the battle of Kosovo, which is rich in its many aspects of interpretation, proved to be a very good choice for students who were able to choose a sub-topic which best suited their understanding, knowledge and level of language proficiency. The sub-topics were: Heroes of the battle, Women of the time, Heroes versus traitors, Significance of the battle for young people in Australia, Commemoration of the battle, national identification or History of the battle written in verses of folk poems.

Although a small number of students chose to discuss the role of men and women in Serbian society in the past and today, those who chose it were well prepared and talked with interest, usually taking sides, either supporting women or men and their way of living and treating others. The sub-topics were: Today it is easier to be a woman/man, Traditional

and modern jobs, Life of women in the past, Traditional point of view versus modern point of view, Women in Serbian community and within Australian society.

All sub-topics were very interesting and challenging, as they required a high proficiency in the language in order to understand the sub-topic chosen, to present and discuss it appropriately. They involved lots of reading and research by students and lots of practice by their teachers.

Resources used were good and reflected the resourcefulness of teachers who prepared materials that ranged from written resources such as books, folk poems, legends and stories, to reports and historical data from the web, as well as audio-visual resources such as documentaries or movies. Students also brought some visual images which helped them in their discussion, especially when they were talking about the battle of Kosovo, which they tried to illustrate with reproductions of Kosovo's maiden, Kosovo's monasteries or Kosovo's heroes: Czar Lazar or Milos Obilic. Students referred to them, drew some conclusions or used them as descriptive items to support their opinion.

This year, students were not burdened so much with memorising historical data or names of famous kings. This helped them to relax as much as possible under examination conditions and to discuss their topic using what they had learned and prepared.

Students who chose the second topic were generally more relaxed and more confident in their verbal skills as, even though they had to refer to the resources used and studied, they could also draw on their own experience and real life knowledge, which helped them in defending their point of view.

### **Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas**

Most students showed maturity and responsibility for their learning in the way they discussed their chosen sub-topic. More successful students were able to compare and contrast between two types of texts or two different, but significant characters in the Kosovo epic, e.g. folk poem about Czar Lazar and historical data/biography and to discuss the influence of the other people of his time and later, or the influence of two contrasting figures of the time, one hero and one traitor and the way they were depicted in history and folk literature.

In choosing the second topic, students were not so bound by historical data but had to refer to the resources and interpret them in the light of the past or present. They had to give good reasons for their opinions, choose well from the resources they quoted and draw upon them. Most students who chose this topic also opted for more modern sub-topics or aspects of life either of men or women, which was shown by their choice of resources. They discussed the current situation of their generation more readily than they would embark on discussion about older days and the life of nineteenth-century women or men. They were more interested in what the future holds for them and how their tradition and traditional upbringing would affect their relationships or work. To offer this kind of insight they used more modern films and newspaper or magazine articles to back up their opinion or would use their own experience to justify their theories.

### **Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar**

The most common mistakes made by students were the usage of cases and agreement of nouns with adjectives and verbs. These problems could be explained by the usage of dialects or a general lack of fluency. Some students showed a tendency to use the sentence structure of English which also led to confusion and mistakes. Others used a lot of colloquialisms as they would use them at home in everyday communication with their parents, which certainly adds to the richness of the language but is not a part of usage in its standard form. Most students were fluent and did not have problems in understanding the questions and responding to them. Those who had studied hard and prepared throughout the year, performed well.

### **Clarity of expression**

Most students discussed their topic well, as they were better prepared and understood what was required of them in the second part of their examination. Nevertheless, they have to be reminded that no questions will be asked outside their knowledge but that incorrect or misleading resources can lead to questions that students cannot answer or did not cover while studying. More successful students came with lots of interesting details and opinions to share with the assessor/s. They were confident and referred to the resources they used while working on the Detailed Study.

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