ITALIAN

Paper 1346/01

Speaking

General Comments

In general, most candidates displayed excellent language aptitude and were able to capitalise on their competence in other languages.   However, this examination does not only test language: a well researched topic and the ability to take part in a spontaneous discussion are also crucial to success in this examination. It should be noted that this examination was taken by a somewhat atypical candidature of generally high achievers.

Factual Knowledge and Opinions

The candidates chose their topics wisely, making sure that there was scope for analysis, evaluation and opinion, and were able to demonstrate their full potential, relying on skills acquired through other parts of the curriculum.   Most chose to discuss a literary text or a film, with some comparing two texts/films.   All candidates showed genuine interest in their topic and pleasure in discussing it.

Presentations were generally well timed and well articulated, leading naturally to discussion.   A visiting Examiner has the advantage, over a Teacher Examiner, of not knowing the candidates and not having been involved in the preparation of the topic.   This ensures spontaneity of discussion and requires candidates to show the ability to adapt their prepared material to respond to the Examiner's questions.   In this case, candidates were able to present a good range of pertinent facts, had the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and expressed opinions in a natural manner during their conversation with the Examiner.

Language

A large proportion of the candidates were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. Performances ranged from good to very good, with a couple of exceptions at the lower end of the scale and one at the top.   Candidates were generally able to control their accuracy and were ready to correct mistakes spontaneously.   The most common mistakes concerned the use of prepositions, sometimes influenced by English and other times by their dominant foreign language, which occasionally also influenced vocabulary and structures.   There were occasional instances of lack of control over agreements, gender and verb endings.

Pronunciation and Intonation

There were generally good or very good levels of pronunciation and intonation.   The most common mistakes were misplaced stress, some end vowel sounds and the pronunciation of double consonants.   Fluency was taken account of within the pronunciation and intonation category.

Conclusion

These candidates were well prepared for this test and performed well.   For the Examiner this was a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

ITALIAN

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Paper 1346/02

Listening, Reading and Writing

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General Comments

On the whole, the candidates showed a good grasp of the higher registers of the language, both when demonstrating their understanding of spoken and written Italian and when communicating their ideas on paper. There were some more demanding parts of the paper in **Parts (I)** and **(II)** where many candidates failed to grasp the sense of the text or (more rarely) what was required by the question, but equally there were some candidates who showed the ability in these parts of the paper to understand material of a high degree of complexity (idiomatic language, culturally remote content etc.). It should be noted that this year's examination was taken by a somewhat atypical candidature. These candidates would be considered more than usually able, and had prepared for the paper by studying one year of Italian *ab initio*. It should be noted therefore that in these respects the candidature was not what we might call 'representative' in terms of range of ability or preparation, and that the comments and reflections that follow should be read in the light of this caveat.

Part I: Listening Comprehension

Candidates are advised to read the questions carefully before each extract is played for the first time; moreover they might benefit from a careful look at the information provided about the extract they are about to hear (title, brief context etc.). They should ensure that their answers to the questions make sense; full sentences are not required, but candidates should ensure that they have provided enough detail to give a full and clear answer to the question. This advice is equally valid for the Reading Comprehension section (**Part II**).

Brano d'ascolto 1 caused very few problems for candidates even at the lower end of the ability range.

Brano d'ascolto 2 proved more demanding. In **Question 8** some candidates did not seem to understand the link between producing fewer grapes and improving the quality of the wines. In **Question 9** there was widespread confusion of *emigrazione* and *immigrazione*, with few candidates gaining the mark. **Question 12** required candidates to explain that the company had grown from one site to four, but surprisingly few candidates managed this.

Brano d'ascolto 3 was well done on the whole despite containing some complex language. However, **Question 23-24** proved to be beyond almost all candidates, who could not make sense of some key words: *mendicanti, infastidiscono, non-vedente, inciampato* and *sdraiato*.

Part II: Reading Comprehension

Testo di lettura 1 proved readily accessible to the majority of the candidates, although a few did not seem to understand the context of the passage at all. Many appropriate answers were suggested by candidates for **Question 27**, although weaker candidates struggled with this question.

Testo di lettura 2 contained questions that were well done by candidates as well as some that proved more difficult. **Question 30** fell into the latter category, with few candidates able to understand *dolce far niente*. In **Question 31** quite a few candidates seemed to have understood the link but were unable to explain it clearly in Italian. The problems raised by **Question 33** were perhaps more cultural than linguistic: relatively few candidates understood that the idea of *mini-viaggiatori* was a cultural departure for Italian families.

Testo di lettura 3 also contained some easier questions and some more difficult ones. Surprisingly few candidates understood *non suona più due volte*, apparently confusing *non ... più* with *non ... più di*. In **Question 38** rendering the word *snello* caused quite a few difficulties, as did the word *gradini* in **Question 43**.

Part III: Guided Writing

Although there was a range of answers on **Question 46**, the vast majority of the candidates demonstrated the ability to communicate clearly in Italian. The two questions proved equally popular among the candidates. Almost all scored highly for content by ensuring that they addressed each of the five bullet points, and candidates are advised that this is a prerequisite for a satisfactory content score. They are not, however, obliged to devote the same amount of time to each of these points.

The most successful answers were those which offered a clear point of view in response to the stimulus texts, perhaps outlining this at the start of the essay and developing/illustrating in the body of the answer. A less successful approach was simply to tackle the five bullet points almost in isolation with no real coherence. Including appropriate originality of content was another way in which the more successful candidates scored highly here. In terms of language, most candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of some of the more advanced grammar and vocabulary, and were thus able to maintain an appropriate register of Italian in their answers. Although accuracy is only one of the relevant criteria when assessing candidates' language, it was noticeable that even towards the top of the ability range there was quite a high incidence of grammatical inaccuracy.