ITALIAN

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Paper 1346/01
Speaking
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Assessment:

Prepared Topic Discussion

Factual knowledge and opinion (14 marks)

Range and accuracy (10 marks)

Pronunciation and intonation (6 marks)

The exam was taken by one Centre only, with a somewhat atypical candidature of generally high achievers, who, thanks to their language aptitude and their ability to capitalise on their competence in other languages, were able to go from ab-initio to Pre-U short course in one academic year.

As well as rewarding linguistic ability, this exam also requires candidates to handle knowledge and to express their opinions. Therefore a well researched topic and the ability to take part in a spontaneous discussion can compensate in some cases for any weakness in language.

Factual knowledge and opinion

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. Most of them chose a literary text or a film, some went for a comparison between them. 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. In most instances the Examiner adopted the position of the "interested layman" acknowledging that the candidate was the "expert". This ensured spontaneity of discussion and elicited from candidates the ability to adapt their prepared material to respond to the Examiner's questions. Candidates were able to present a good range of pertinent facts, had the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and to express their opinions in a naturally flowing conversation with the Examiner.

Language (range and accuracy)

The majority of the candidates were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. Candidates were generally able to control their accuracy and they were ready to correct themselves when they realised they had made a mistake. Performances were generally in the range "good" to "very good". The most common mistakes concerned the use of prepositions, sometimes influenced by English and other times by their dominant foreign language, which may also influence vocabulary and structures at times. 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

Conclusion

These candidates were well prepared for this component and performed well. For the Examiner this was, once again, a rewarding experience.

ITALIAN

Paper 1346/02
Reading, Listening and Writing

Preamble

Only one Centre entered candidates for this paper. 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 Examiners 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.

General Comments

The candidates showed for the most part 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.). On the whole the paper proved effective in discriminating between candidates of differing abilities, with some relatively straightforward questions and some much more difficult ones.

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 di ascolto 1 caused very few problems for candidates; one or two did not grasp the sense of the expression *portata a bordo* and consequently dropped a mark here.

Brano di ascolto 2 proved a little more demanding. In **Question 9** some candidates were unable to render clearly the idea that mosaics and frescoes had been damaged, and the idea that souvenir hunters were removing bits of the site was not widely understood. Most candidates dealt with **Question 10**, although some candidates did not see what the question was getting at, as is often the way with this kind of 'inference' question. In **Question 12** some candidates were unable to express the idea that the first aid post had been set up (this was one of the *misure* to which the question referred), while the closure of the restaurant was not widely understood.

Brano di ascolto 3 was demanding, but the complex language, along with some questions which required candidates to infer meanings, acted as a useful differentiator between more able and less able candidates. In **Question 15** there was some misunderstanding of the expression *primi anni Settanta*, but otherwise candidates coped quite well with the first three questions. Almost all candidates found **Question 17** beyond them, either failing to understand *se ne allontana* or not seeing the subtext of the question. In **Question 21** there was a surprising incidence of candidates mistaking *nonno* for *nonna*. **Question 24** also proved beyond many candidates, again either because of the idiomatic language (*si sono montati la testa*) or because the question required inference.

Part II: Reading Comprehension

Testo di lettura 1 proved readily accessible to the majority of the candidates. One or two candidates did not seem to understand the context at all, but otherwise the only difficult question proved to be **Question 29**, where some candidates seemed to misunderstand the tense of the question.

Testo di lettura 2 was a more difficult text which allowed more able candidates to stand out. In **Question 30** a surprising number of responses showed a lack of understanding of the idiom *mettere la testa sotto la sabbia*. In **Question 31** almost all candidates were able to say that 64% of Italians thought this subject important, but there was widespread confusion in the rendering of *soltanto un quinto se ne occupa*, with many candidates reading *ne* as *non* (and therefore offering the opposite of the information sought) and some conflating *occuparsi* with *disoccupati*. In **Question 34** some candidates understood the subtext of the example given, but others did not: this tended to be a question where they scored either two marks or nothing. In **Question 37** most but not all candidates understood that the specific intention of the crossword was to improve familiarity with financial terminology as opposed to improving financial awareness in general.

Testo di lettura 3 proved much more accessible to candidates, all of whom understood the concept of the house swap without apparent difficulty and were able to work out many of the answers even where there were quite difficult words in the text. In **Question 40** many candidates only offered one justification and were therefore unable to access the second mark. One or two candidates dropped the mark for **Question 42** because they read *meta* as *metà*.

Part III: Guided Writing

The two alternatives in **Question 49** proved equally popular among the candidates. Almost all scored highly for content by ensuring they addressed each of the five bullet points in some detail, 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, some candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of some of the more advanced grammar (subjunctive, conditional, passive etc.), as well as a good grasp of topic-specific vocabulary and some familiarity with idiomatic language vocabulary. Almost all candidates were 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.