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FIRST LANGUAGE CZECH

<p>Paper 0514/02 Reading and Directed Writing</p>

General comments

The general level of performance on this paper was very good.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The first task focused on the ability to compare two stylistically different texts. In most cases, candidates understood the first text well and were able to extract the required information. A small number of candidates failed to discern what information was relevant to the task and which information was not or, in a very small number of cases, misunderstood what the text was about entirely.

A small group of candidates found it hard to understand the meaning of the second text, a poem by Vítězslav Nezval, and, as a result, these candidates often tried to attribute facts and/or ideas to the poem that were not part of its meaning. A very small number of candidates were unable to articulate their thoughts on the second text intelligibly.

Question 2

A number of candidates restricted themselves to listing facts or describing certain events, instead of expressing their own ideas/opinions, which was the objective of this essay task. Candidates are also reminded that ideas expressed must be adequately supported, not just plainly stated. Nevertheless, a large number of answers were refined, well thought out and often well documented.

An overabundance of rhetorical questions and clichés (such as “life was much better in the past before the age of computers and mobile phones, and people were much happier”) is corrosive to the quality of the essay and can detract from the arguments candidates are trying to get across.

A number of candidates frequently used foreign terminology. Some, however, did not follow the linguistic conventions for the use and spelling of such words in Czech.

Question 3

The objective here was to use key information from the third text to write an interview with the person about whom the text was written. Most compositions were either excellent or very good, and there were only a few difficulties, mostly related to the choice of questions used and the order in which they were placed, which resulted in an uneven structure of some of the interviews. A small number of candidates had difficulty selecting relevant facts from the texts, focusing instead on relatively trivial information, which meant that some interviews ended up being rather superficial. Very occasionally, candidates distorted information provided in the text or deviated from the text, when they had been asked to use the information in the text for their interview.

Although it is understood that colloquial language is part of many modern interviews, there were some cases in which colloquial Czech was used too often and/or inappropriately.

Finally, candidates are reminded they must be careful when using conditionals of the verb “to be”, as quite a large number of errors were made in this area of grammar.

<p>Paper 0514/03 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

Candidates made their selection fairly evenly across the range of topics, although the most popular topic was number 9 (my generation). Most candidates performed either well or very well on this paper. However, there were some candidates who simply described facts without discussing them critically or without trying to approach their topic from more than one perspective. A small number of candidates used rhetorical questions too often or inappropriately; some essays contained exclamations such as "What are we going to do about it?" or "Whose fault is it?" in places where candidates appeared to have run out of ideas. If candidates decide to use rhetorical questions to emphasise an idea, they should do so sparingly and only as a prelude to an analysis of the problem or idea highlighted by the rhetorical question.

Frequently occurring linguistic errors included:

- Incorrect use of grammar in adjectives placed after nouns;
- Incorrect prepositional structures – there is an obvious influence from English and its preposition/verb structures;
- Incorrect spelling of foreign and borrowed words – again, candidates often use the English spelling of such words;
- Incorrect capitalisation at the beginning of certain words;
- Incorrect punctuation.

Candidates are advised to read through their answers before finishing the test, in order to avoid errors such as the ones listed above.

Comments on specific questions*My generation*

The majority of the candidates picked this topic probably because it was closely related to their own lives. Most described the views and aspirations of their generation very well. Unfortunately, in some cases, candidates did not venture beyond describing these views and aspirations, and, as a result, their essays lacked a degree of insight into the reasons why the young generation behaves the way it does and why it values certain ideas and objectives more than others.

Life with a handicap does not have to be a handicapped life.

There were some very good essays written on this second-most frequently selected topic. Most candidates chose to write a story about a person who is forced to come to terms with a handicap. Again, a few candidates were unable to convey insights into the quality of life of a handicapped individual in addition to telling his or her story.

A literary story

Candidates were asked to recount briefly a literary story and then explain why they were touched by this story or what impact the story had on their own lives. Occasionally, there was an imbalance between retelling the story and explaining why that story affected the reader in a certain way, with some candidates only achieving the first element of the task.

I do not agree with you

Quite a large number of candidates chose this challenging topic. Some used the experience of their parents from the times of communism in Czechoslovakia to describe what it was like to live in an era in which there was no freedom of speech. Despite the fact that most candidates did not have any personal experience which they could bring to bear on their essays, they used their imagination well, resulting in some very captivating essays.

Neighbours

Most candidates who chose this topic described the characteristics of a good or bad neighbour in plenty of detail. Some candidates only managed to tackle this topic with a fairly limited vocabulary. For example, such candidates often reverted to forms of the verbs “to be” and/or “to have” instead of using a variety of verbs, which would have helped them to articulate better what they were trying get across.

A petition to keep a park open

A well-written petition should clearly, comprehensively and, perhaps most importantly, assertively formulate a group’s or an individual’s opinions and objectives, supported by cogent arguments. Although most candidates were successful in finding good arguments for not closing down the park, some found it difficult to find the right style to convey those arguments.

Feature story

A large number of candidates chose this topic. A small number of candidates misinterpreted what the topic was about and, as a result, the focus of their text was wrong. Candidates are advised to read the topic question carefully, before starting to write.

Remaining two topics

These topics were chosen only by a very small number of candidates, so a generalised evaluation cannot be made.