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FOREIGN LANGUAGE ITALIAN

Paper 0535/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

This Paper tests candidates' ability to understand written Italian and to communicate in writing. Candidates were required to read material in Italian and to convey information by responding to a range of questions, either by ticking the appropriate box or by expressing answers in their own words. They were also required to write a letter of about 80-100 words. The standard of work was generally good, as in previous years, with very few exceptions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1 - 5

This was a multiple choice exercise and the majority of candidates scored full marks. Although no question was consistently answered incorrectly, mistakes were perhaps most frequent on **Questions 3** and **5**, where candidates sometimes did not know the Italian for 'cutlery' and/or 'fire'.

Exercise 2 Questions 6 - 10

In this exercise, candidates had to answer 5 true or false questions. Again, this did not seem to present candidates with any particular difficulty, but when errors were found, they were mostly in reply to **Questions 9** and **10**.

The correct answers were as follows: **Question 6:** Falso; **Question 7:** Vero; **Question 8:** Vero; **Question 9:** Falso; **Question 10:** Vero.

Exercise 3 Questions 11 - 15

In this exercise, candidates had to identify to which hotel (Arcobaleno, Mulino or Scoiattolo) certain statements referred by ticking the appropriate box. This, again, was well answered by most candidates, but **Questions 11** and **13** were sometimes answered incorrectly, probably because candidates did not understand the term '*all'aperto*' (**Question 11**), and/or did not realise that the Hotel Arcobaleno was closed only in the evening on Sundays (**Question 13**).

The correct answers were as follows: **Question 11:** M; **Question 12:** S; **Question 13:** A; **Question 14:** S; **Question 15:** M.

Exercise 4 Question 16

In this exercise, based on three written specifications and two visual stimuli, candidates had to leave a message about themselves for an Italian girl. They had to include: **(a)** where they were from; **(b)** how long they had been studying Italian; and **(c)** what their favourite activities were (cycling and dancing). Candidates were required to cover all three elements. Linguistic accuracy was not an issue unless it detracted from the meaning of the message.

The question was tackled well and where marks were lost, this was mostly by weaker candidates who did not write a clear message, or did not complete some/one of the tasks. Some candidates mentioned favourite activities other than those depicted on the Question Paper – either because they did not have the necessary vocabulary or because they did not realise what was required. In addition, for **(a)**, some candidates wrote where they *were* rather than where they *were from*, e.g. 'I am in Italy...' rather than 'I come from...'

Most candidates scored at least 4 of the 5 marks available.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17 - 24

In this exercise, candidates had to answer questions relating to a passage about a man who, on his first day in a new job, was held at gunpoint by two thieves, who later ran away and turned out to have been using a toy gun.

Candidates always handle this particular exercise well, but this year, candidates put in an even stronger performance than usual, with the majority scoring full marks.

The correct answers were as follows:

Question 17 *era il primo giorno di lavoro*

Question 18 *contento/allegro*

Question 19 *la paura di arrivare in ritardo*

Question 20 *un uomo con la pistola*

Question 21 *ha paura/mantiene la calma*

Question 22 *arrivano persone/il bandito scappa*

Question 23 *(i) avvertono la polizia, (ii) piangono/si abbracciano*

Question 24 *(i) la pistola era finta, (ii) i rapinatori sono stati presi*

Exercise 2 Question 25

In this exercise, candidates had to write a letter, talking about their activities at home.

The letter was generally quite well written and all the required points were covered. A good proportion of candidates was able to set out the letter correctly and scored good marks for communication. There were a number of well developed letters with a confident use of structures and a good range of vocabulary. It is worth reminding candidates of the importance of reading the instructions carefully, as several stated who they liked to be with, but not *why* they liked to be with them, thus denying themselves the marks allocated for that part of the task.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26 - 32

This reading comprehension exercise required candidates to answer multiple choice questions based on a passage about Italian women making a career in various types of farming. The final question (for two marks) required an answer in the candidates' own words. This exercise was, as intended, more demanding than the previous ones. The questions that most frequently caused difficulties were **Questions 26, 29 and 30**. Better candidates tended to answer **Question 32** very well, but weaker candidates often simply copied a chunk of irrelevant text from the passage, without showing any real understanding.

The correct answers were as follows: **Question 26:** A; **Question 27:** B; **Question 28:** D; **Question 29:** B; **Question 30:** B; **Question 31:** C; **Question 32:** *piu persone devono mettersi a fare cose utili per l'ambiente (non solo parlare) prima che sia troppo tardi.*

Exercise 2 Questions 33 - 39

This exercise was based on an article entitled '*I cybernonni del nuovo millennio*' about courses in Italy aimed at teaching elderly people how use the Internet. **Question 34** caused particular problems as candidates often did not understand the meaning of the word '*metropolitani*' and gave the answer '*quelli che vogliono imparare da soli*'. **Question 38** also presented occasional difficulties, as some candidates were unable to pick out from the text reasons why elderly people feared the Internet.

The correct answers were as follows:

- Question 33** *il numero di cybernonni e raddoppiato*
- Question 34** *a quelli che non abitano in città*
- Question 35** *insegnano/istruiscono gli allievi*
- Question 36** **(i)** *pazienza/gentilezza/semplificata*, **(ii)** *competenza/attenzione/charezza*
- Question 37** **(i)** *il desiderio di avere un passatempo/un'attività*, **(ii)** *un interesse specifico/la curiosità*
- Question 38** **(i)** *non riuscire a imparare/non avere mai usato il computer*, **(ii)** *fare brutta figura con i familiari*
- Question 39** **(i)** *fanno ricerche/possono usare la posta elettronica per comunicare*, **(ii)** *hanno fatto nuove amicizie*, **(iii)** *trovano informazioni pratiche*

<p>Paper 0535/03</p>

<p>Speaking</p>

General comments

This test continues to give good results. Most candidates performed their tasks in the Role play section with confidence and ease, and went on to give an effective presentation of a topic of their choice, which was then discussed with the Examiner. This was followed by a general conversation on a variety of everyday topics. Occasionally, communication became difficult and was achieved only partially. All Examiners displayed a friendly manner, most were well prepared for the Role plays and demonstrated an effective questioning technique in the two conversation sections, thus enabling candidates to show what they knew and could do.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

This section of the examination tests how well a candidate can deal with two guided conversations in Italian, for which he/she has 15 minutes to prepare. Each reply receives a mark ranging from 0 (for an unintelligible utterance) to 3 (for an accurate utterance, expressed in the appropriate register).

The situations in the '**A**' **Role plays**, drawn from a well-defined range of topics, required familiarity with the minimum core vocabulary only. The situations in the '**B**' **Role plays**, on the other hand, were slightly more complex and required a wider range of vocabulary.

Most candidates gave relevant and correct answers, achieving the highest marks in both Role plays, but lower marks were also awarded, often when double answers were required, and only one was given. Examiners are reminded that they may prompt candidates who forget to complete a task. However, Examiners must ensure that when they prompt, they do not provide candidates with the reply, as marks cannot be awarded where the 'task' is completed by the Examiner.

This year there was a noticeable, and very pleasing, improvement in the level of preparation shown by Examiners in the Role plays. In the café situation (**Role play A**, cards 1, 2, 3) many Examiners (playing the part of the waiter) showed great skill in presenting the 'customer' with the incomplete order, thus ensuring a realistic and smooth interaction with the candidate, who had to point out that an item was missing from their order.

On a question of procedure, it was pleasing to note that most Examiners did as requested and identified which Role play card was being used.

Topic (prepared) conversation

This test is allocated up to 15 marks for 'comprehension and responsiveness' (scale A – which also takes into account how well a topic has been prepared), and up to 15 marks again for 'linguistic complexity and range' (scale B). In general, marks for comprehension and fluency of response were higher than marks for vocabulary and accuracy, but only slightly.

Most candidates had prepared well for this section of the test and presented a variety of subjects in which they had a personal interest. The subject chosen most often was holiday/travel, followed by various sports, such as football, skiing, tennis, rugby, water sports and even yoga. Hobbies were also popular, from photography to music – listening to and playing. One candidate chose to talk about Harry Potter's first book, another about his own family history, going back several generations. It was pleasing to hear the genuine interest and passion for the topic chosen, and there were very few examples of topics that were overambitious or rather dry in nature.

This year, the timing of the presentation and the ensuing discussion was much closer to that stipulated in the instructions (5 minutes in all) than was the case last year. However, Examiners are reminded that they must allow candidates to present their topic for one minute, uninterrupted, before asking questions – in a few cases, the immediate firing of questions by the Examiner meant that candidates had no opportunity at all to present their topic.

In the discussion that followed the topic presentation, most candidates showed a good level of comprehension and responded fluently. Most Examiners managed to lead their candidates into using a variety of tenses and asked for explanations, enlargements, descriptions relating to the topic, thus helping their candidates to show their full linguistic ability. Indeed, it is very important to stress that Examiners should avoid the overuse of closed questions, which produce just one word answers, and make a conscious effort to use the 'tell me about/why?/how?' type of questions.

Overall, the assessment of candidates was close to the agreed standard, though many Examiners were slightly (or rather) harsh, especially in respect of scale B (linguistic complexity and range).

General (unprepared) conversation

This test is assessed in the same way as the Topic Conversation, with up to 15 marks for 'comprehension and responsiveness' and up to 15 marks for 'linguistic complexity and range'. Questions were usually focused on day-to-day topics, such as family, school, free time, recent or future holidays, plans for the future, etc. Most candidates answered without difficulty, both in terms of grammatical structures and of fluency. Here again, it is important to keep to the stipulated time (5 minutes) and to vary the questions, covering more than one topic and remembering that the purpose of the conversation is to allow the candidate to demonstrate his/her linguistic abilities. The occasional errors made by candidates did not substantially affect marks, which were usually in line with, or just slightly below, those awarded for the previous section of the test.

Impression

A mark out of 10 is also awarded for the 'overall impression' made by each candidate's pronunciation and intonation, as well as fluency of delivery. In a few cases, delivery was slow and laboured and pronunciation/intonation showed a certain amount of interference from the candidate's mother-tongue, but the majority of candidates displayed good control of the Italian sounds and accurate intonation and were awarded marks of 8-10.

<p>Paper 0535/04 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

The aim of this Paper is to test to what extent candidates are able to write a piece of prose which is both relevant and correct. Each of the two questions is assessed for 'communication' (5 marks), 'accuracy in the use of structures' (15 marks) and 'impression' (5 marks). The communication mark reflects how well the candidate has completed the task (whether he/she has followed the instructions given and how fully the various points have been developed). Accuracy is assessed on the basis of an evaluation of correct grammatical structures and quality of language. The mark for impression is awarded for fluency, degree of judgement or opinion and variety of expression.

As in previous years, the standard of work was generally high and most candidates were able to write correct Italian and respond fully to the tasks set. A number of candidates were awarded full marks in both parts of the Paper as their letters were fully developed and clearly written, with excellent use of language. In general, candidates followed the guidelines accurately and covered all the required points.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

There was a choice between a letter to an Italian friend describing an occasion when the candidate did not tell the truth and a letter to an Italian friend describing a birthday celebration that was out of the ordinary. The second option was the more popular.

The work produced by candidates was good, in general, and there were a significant number of excellent scripts which conveyed a great deal of information and showed a wide knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

As usual, the more able candidates made good use of the stimulus given to produce a thoughtful account, including opinion and reason as well as descriptions. Many produced convincing responses and in answer to **(a)** made up interesting stories about lies told to parents (generally speaking) or friends covering a wide range of situations. Most candidates wrote imaginatively, coherently and sometimes humorously.

As regards accuracy, it is difficult to generalise about different candidates' achievements. Only a very few displayed considerable weakness in grammar and vocabulary, while stronger candidates showed a very good understanding of complex structures, such as the use of conditional and subjunctive, as well as displaying a wide range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions.

Question 2

In this exercise, candidates had to write about a letter they received which pleased them greatly. They had to describe what the letter was about, what happened next and their reactions to this experience.

Again, many candidates performed very well and a considerable number gained full marks. The vast majority talked about an invitation by a friend to join him/her on a holiday and expressed their joy and pleasure at receiving such good news. The majority of candidates seemed to be well prepared for this type of exercise and covered all the bullet points in their answers, showing they could use a wide range of vocabulary and giving clear opinions.