PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

Paper 9783/01

Speaking

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, consider the issue raised in their chosen article and their own reaction(s) to it
- in Part II, choose a subject which genuinely interests them and which clearly relates to a country where the target language is spoken
- in Parts I and II, be prepared to take the lead in the conversation
- in Parts I and II, be ready to engage in natural and spontaneous discussion

General comments

The overall exam is of considerable length but candidates appeared to be able to maintain their level of performance over the entire exam. Performances for the two parts of the exam were well balanced.

The *Discussion of a newspaper article and related themes* part of the speaking exam is only present in the Principal Course and it represents a free and challenging exercise in which candidates can demonstrate their ability to engage in free-flowing discussion with the Examiner.

The *Prepared oral topic* is as required for the Short Course and examiners interpret and apply the mark grids in an identical fashion.

Part 1 - Discussion of a newspaper article and related themes

Candidates could choose a stimulus card from

1 Matrimonio o convivenza? (Theme: Human relationships)
2 Schiavi dell'ipermercato? (Theme: Patterns of daily life)
3 Studiare da giornalista (Theme: Education)
4 Eliminare gli imballaggi (Theme: Environment)

Card 4 was by far the most popular as candidates felt comfortable with discussing the familiar theme of environment. There were nonetheless interesting discussions on the remaining three cards and relative themes.

Candidates were not required to understand the article in detail, but only well enough to be able to engage in discussion on the issues raised. As a matter of fact, the stimulus in the most popular card was perhaps the least well understood, yet candidates coped with this part of the exam very well. They were able to outline the main theme of the article, discuss the issues it raised and broaden the conversation to the general theme.

Part 2 - Prepared oral topic

The familiar topic of literary texts and films were strongly represented this year as well, but with more Centres taking this exam the range of topics broadened, to include Berlusconi, the effect of tourism, religious symbols, Italian cuisine and slow food. Topics were generally wisely chosen. Early submission of the chosen topics allowed the Examiner to warn or advise Centres when a topic was likely to hinder a candidate's performance.

Presentations were generally well timed and well articulated, leading to spontaneous discussions that made it possible for candidates to demonstrate their ability to adapt their prepared material to respond to the Examiner's questions. Most 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.

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Language (range and accuracy)

In terms of language, there was a wide range of competence, from candidates who had difficulty even with basic structures to candidates who were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. As could be expected, scores for language were slightly higher for part 2, but only marginally so. Even at this level, the most common mistakes remain the use of prepositions, some influence from other foreign languages and some lack of control over agreements, gender and occasionally over verb endings.

Pronunciation and Intonation.

Candidates appear to have mastered the sounds of Italian, is spite of the occasional misplaced stress and mispronunciation of double consonant or vowel sounds.

Conclusion

Most candidates appear to have fully understood the requirements of this unit, were well prepared for it and performed to the best of their abilities.

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PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

Paper 9783/02
Reading and Listening

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information in unambiguous language.

General comments

In the Reading section, it was necessary for candidates to be able to target pieces of information as they arose in order in the text. Strong candidates were able to use a degree of inference where necessary. Successful candidates were also able to identify where two pieces of information were required by the question, and if justification / expansion of an answer was necessary.

Success in the translation question relies on keeping as close as possible to the original, and using correctly items that have already appeared elsewhere in the paper.

For the Listening section of this paper, candidates needed to follow information sequentially, and use the material they heard selectively in order to answer the questions. Successful candidates gave succinct answers; candidates must avoid transcribing long chunks of material 'around' the answer.

Success in the summary question is in part due to being able to keep to the word count – to produce a true summary, rather than a transcript of everything heard. The bullet points provide a framework for this.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Testo di lettura 1

Question 1

Candidates who answered this question successfully were able to see that the information targeted by the question was the notion of "more employment" rather than that of "awarding prizes".

Question 2

Most candidates rightly targeted the notion of "many participants", but some focused on the number of winners.

Question 3

It was encouraging that the majority of candidates realised two separate pieces of information were required here, and were given credit accordingly.

Question 4

Candidates were not required to give a dictionary definition of "spaventapasseri", and many were able to explain the concept successfully by considering it in the context of the passage.

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Question 5

Some candidates considered the idea of money-saving, others of money-making. Both were acceptable inferences.

Question 6

The simple answer "children" was sufficient for the award of the mark, but it was good to see so many candidates communicating effectively the notion of "children who don't like fish".

Question 7

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 8

In order to gain the mark for this question, candidates needed to communicate effectively either the notion that the initiative involved the use of natural waste or the idea that it *did not* involve the use of electricity etc.

Question 9

Some degree of manipulation was required here if the answer was going to constitute a clear, unambiguous answer to the question.

Testo di lettura 2

Question 10

Strong candidates realised here that a superlative was required to explain the notion of the "record" e.g. the highest number of unfinished building projects or the most money wasted on buildings.

Question 11

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 12

In order to gain the mark here, candidates needed to explain that the pool was too short.

Question 13

Some candidates struggled to understand the word "gradini", but this was well-answered on the whole.

Question 14

Credit could not be given here where candidates suggested that the organisers of the festival were trying to make Giarre a more attractive town, but those candidates who suggested that they were trying to attract tourists were awarded the mark.

Question 15

Stronger candidates were able to explain the concept of "sprecone" here, but a dictionary understanding of the word was not necessary for the award of the mark.

Question 16

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 17

Most candidates made a suitable inference here, thereby gaining the mark.

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Testo di lettura 3

Question 18

There were few especially weak answers to this question and the more successful candidates were rigorous in their checking of correct verb forms and adjectival agreements. The vast majority of candidates were able to identify words and phrases from the previous reading passage and used them successfully, even when manipulation was required.

Part 2

Brano d'ascolto 1

Question 19

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 20

In order to gain this mark, candidates were required to give both date and year – expressed either as numbers or words.

Question 21

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 22

Some candidates struggled to frame their responses as a clear answer to the question here, and only the stronger candidates were sufficiently confident to express succinctly the notions of "shock" and "strength".

Question 23

Candidates were awarded the mark *either* for expressing the notion of charisma *or* that of selflessness.

Question 24

Some candidates used the wrong tense in their answer, but most answered this question successfully.

Question 25

The majority of candidates communicated the answer successfully.

Question 26

Not all candidates expressed their answer as the fulfilment of a dream, even though most had understood the relevant section of the passage.

Question 27

The best answers here showed an awareness of time frame and expressed successfully the notion that Ferragamo <u>had</u> (already) moved on.

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Brano d'ascolto 2

Question 28

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 29

The vast majority of candidates were able to give two reasons for Guido having left his job, thereby gaining both available marks.

Question 30

Candidates produced a wide variety of answers here, most of which were acceptable.

Question 31

Most candidates answered this question successfully, although some struggled to understand "pannolini" or "unghie".

Question 32

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question 33

Almost all candidates communicated the first point successfully – that Guido was able to attend a mosaic-making course – but many missed the second part of the question: "and why can he now do it?"

Question 34

Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Brano d'ascolto 3

Question 35

Candidates should be encouraged to stick rigorously to the 100-word limit, and should try to address each of the bullet points. The strongest candidates were able to cover more than 10 points in this question because they were able to write concisely, thereby gaining full marks.

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Paper 9783/03
Writing and Usage

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and lexis
- in Part I, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part I, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part II, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts I and II, carefully proofread their responses.

General comments

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this paper. All the candidates completed all sections of the paper and demonstrated both the ability to compose an extended piece of writing in Italian and to apply grammatical structures accurately.

Comments on specific questions

Part I – Discursive Essay

The majority of the candidates showed the ability to communicate clearly in Italian and were at pains to showcase their familiarity with the more sophisticated registers of the language. Basic accuracy (agreements, verb forms etc.) was, as in past series, a little disappointing even in candidates whose written Italian was otherwise fluent, varied and ambitious. Only on a few occasions was it difficult to understand what the candidate was trying to say. The essays were, on the whole, well-structured and – especially at the top end – coherently argued. There was evidence in every case that candidates had planned what they were going to say, and all candidates referred back to the question in their concluding paragraph.

Question 1

(a) The question on globalisation was tackled by quite a number of candidates, and it was on this question that the range of answers was widest. At the lower end, the candidates seemed not to understand (or to attempt to define) the meaning of the term, and as a result their answers often lacked coherence. At the top end of the ability range, however, there were some skilful and insightful answers which brought in a number of key issues (economic benefits, loss of distinct cultural identities etc.).

(b) This also proved to be quite a popular question and it generated wide variety of essays. Less sophisticated answers tended to go over the well-trodden ground of what women have to gain and lose by returning to work after having children without really getting to grips with the contention in the title that their children might grow up less 'healthy and happy'. More successful answers tackled this aspect more convincingly, offering a range of well-justified conclusions.

(c) This question was not very popular, but of those who chose it most concluded that footballers were less 'worthy' of their high salaries than doctors, pointing out the disparity between their salaries and their 'moral' behaviour in public. Some essays attempted to defend footballers by holding them up as high profile ambassadors for a healthier lifestyle.

(d) A handful of candidates chose this question. The best answers here were able to demonstrate that there are both advantages and disadvantages of television in terms of furthering intellectual development (especially in children) – and that it is the use that's made of it rather than the medium itself which is the most influential factor.

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(e) Too few answers to draw any useful conclusions.

Part II – Use of Italian

There were some very good performances on exercises 1 and 2, with many candidates showing an excellent knowledge of some of the most advanced grammatical structures as well as a very pleasing familiarity with irregular verbs. These are quite challenging exercises, and it was therefore inevitable that towards the bottom of the ability range candidates would find occasionally struggle to come up with the correct answers. Exercise 3 seemed to be the less challenging one where even less advanced candidates, perhaps taking advantage of the multiple-choice forma, managed to score a number of marks. There were plenty of candidates at the top end who got everything or almost everything right here – although the difference between *ottimo* and *migliore* on **Question 26** puzzled many candidates.

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Paper 9783/04
Topics and Texts

Key Messages

To score well in this paper candidates should read the questions thoroughly and show in their answers their understanding that individual episodes, characters, and relationships discussed in the texts and films have a more general significance which is what the question will doubtless be targeting. The tendency to recount episodes when illustrating arguments is very difficult to avoid but if candidates concentrate on the point they wish to make such 'narration' will be kept to a minimum. Candidates will do well if they respect the evidence found in their texts and films rather than force it into the mould apparently given by the question.

General comments

Answers to the Mafia questions showed a good level of familiarity with the texts and films and all candidates answered both parts of the questions. Comprehension was compromised now and then by less well developed linguistic skills. Answers to the Mezzogiorno questions engaged well with the tasks and showed a sensitive response to the material. Answers on Fellini and his portrayal of Italians showed a good knowledge of the films and were written in competent Italian. The answers to the questions on the Holocaust were less successful and this was due in large part to a discernible lack of understanding of the questions. Candidates writing about the Dopoguerra all chose to write about the visions of the city to be seen in the texts and film.

The standards of response and linguistic ability were generally good. Candidates would be better advised in some cases to concentrate on two stimuli rather than spread themselves too thinly over three.

Three texts received answers: Dante, Ammaniti, and Fo. Both essay questions were attempted for Dante but not the commentary. Clearly the poem had been studied with enthusiasm. While showing good knowledge of the text the answers did not always display the level of understanding of the material or of the question to produce successful results. All three of the Amminiti questions were attempted. While showing good knowledge of the text candidates were sometimes, it seemed, persuaded by the question, or pre-conceived ideas of the characters, to write answers that did not always sit comfortably with the evidence. Both essays were attempted for Fo's text but not the commentary, with most candidates choosing to discuss the relationship between the play's comedy and message. Good knowledge of the text was displayed but in instances perhaps insufficient understanding of the nature of the relationship they were attempting to describe.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Questions 1

(a) and (b) Both questions solicited answers that showed good knowledge of the text and references to the 'terzo livello' indicated a sophisticated understanding of the nature of Mafia power. Some telling details of the extent of the mafia's power, as described in the mark scheme, were not referred but other relevant details were given, e.g. Bellodi's persuasive and respectful style of interrogation, without drawing out the implications for the possibility of improvement in Sicilians' attitudes towards the Mafia.

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Questions 2

(a) and (b) The answers to **Question 2a** discussing the influence of the idea of fate on Southerners' behaviour showed good control of the material and impressed with an inclusion of the role played by the environment and climate on people's responses to social and political oppression. The answers to 2b were competent in treating the details and characters they discussed, while leaving out one or two important aspects to explain the lack of success in attempts to promote change.

Question 3

(a) The answers to this question were written in very good Italian and Guido and Marcello, and their lady friends, were discussed competently. Other intriguing portraits such as the bathing of the children and the imploring of the Virgin, so important to a more nuanced answer to a question regarding Fellini's portrayal of Italians, were omitted from some accounts.

Questions 4

(a) and (b) The answers to these questions showed adequate knowledge of the texts and film. Good knowledge of the material is vital and so is an adequate understanding of the question. Question 4a was targeting relations between Jews understood in groups (see mark scheme) whereas some answers saw them in much more individual, and consequently less analytical terms. The answers to 4b did not connect very well the notion of Nazi obsession with order and rationality. Neologisms and very rough approximations to lexical and verbal forms sometimes hindered intelligibility.

Question 5

(a) Answers to this question tended to discuss the city as shown in the works in the straightforward terms of post-war poverty and unemployment, the difficulty encountered by many people simply to survive, and the temptations to criminality such hardship can produce. The city as unnatural prison was the way *Marcovaldo* was understood to present urban life. Answers were generally competent and competently written; however, some details that would have offered a more nuanced and balanced approach were overlooked. The vision of the city as full of promise, at least for some people some of the time, was not discussed.

Part 2

Questions 6

(b) and (c) Some good material was on display in answers to both these questions. Good answers will show an understanding of the questions that allows for an elaboration based on more than the obvious and immediate material, particularly with a text as rich and multi-layered as the *Inferno.* Many of the answers given drifted into narration rather than pursue analysis and the focus of attention of the questions was lost to be replaced by considerations of the nature of the poet rather than of his journey or his god.

Questions 11

(a), (b), and (c) A lot of the answers given to these questions were intriguing and rich and candidates showed that they had good knowledge of the text and had studied it closely. Good answers to essay questions will use an accurate understanding of the characters and themes to model a response that does justice to the evidence in the text and the possibilities of nuance and ambivalence in the question. Some candidates writing to these questions seemed too persuaded by what the questions said and so forced their evidence to support it rather than evaluate the questions' points of view. This led them to contradict themselves at times or, in the case of the commentary, to extrapolate a view of Michele's inner response to the scene he is witnessing which is not supported by the text.

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Questions 13

(b) and (c) All the answers to these questions showed good, indeed at times very good, knowledge of the text and a willingness to engage with its themes. Good essays will use such knowledge to illustrate an argument in response to a question and an understanding that terms in questions often need to be analysed if a nuanced and penetrating answer is to be given. Writing about comedy is no easy matter and particularly when comedy is used as the vehicle for ideology and satire it is important not to reduce the comic nature of a piece to mere window dressing. Ambitious though these answers were, on occasion statements were made that were empty of substance and revealed a less than firm grip on the concepts being deployed.

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