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

Assessment:

Part 1 – Discussion of article
Comprehension and discussion (14 marks)
Range and accuracy (10 marks)
Pronunciation and intonation (6 marks).

Part 2 – Prepared topic discussion
Factual knowledge and opinion (14 marks)
Range and accuracy (10 marks)
Pronunciation and intonation (6 marks).

Part 1 and Part 2 can be also be taken in the reverse order, although candidates tend to prefer to start with the discussion of the article that they prepared just before the exam.

The discussion of the article represents a freer and more challenging exercise than Part 2. Candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to engage in a fairly unpredictable discussion, based initially on an article which candidates read before the exam, it then moves on to explore other aspects of the general theme.

Part 2 is the discussion of a prepared topic, the same exercise as required for the Short Course (SC) speaking test. The mark grid for Part 2 is interpreted and applied in the same way as for the SC: candidates performing at the same level will obtain the same mark.

The overall exam is considerably long but candidates appeared to be able to maintain their level of performance over the entire exam, probably because the second part was totally different in nature and involved a lesser degree of unpredictability. Performances for the two parts of the exam were well balanced.

Comments on individual parts

Part 1

Candidates could choose a stimulus card from:

1. *Figli mammoni o genitori possessivi?* (Theme: Family)
2. *Italia decima in Europa per la lotta al tabagismo* (Theme: Health and Fitness)
3. *A scuola col registro elettronico* (Theme: Education)
4. *Mobilità urbana e inquinamento atmosferico* (Theme: Environment)

Card 1 was the most popular and was chosen by a third of the candidates. Card 2 was the least popular. In all Centres candidates chose a variety of themes, which produced interesting discussions both on the article and on the general topic area.

Comprehension and Discussion

Candidates are not required to understand the article in detail, but only well enough to be able to engage in discussion on the issues raised. 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

Literary texts or films were still the most popular choice, with a broad range of titles. It is generally a good choice as it provides scope for analysis, evaluation and opinion and allows candidates to demonstrate their full potential. The same can be said about historical or sociological issues and current affairs. Candidates should not be encouraged to prepare topics with mainly factual information or topics which do not fully meet the requirement of being related to the history, current affairs or culture of an area of the world where Italian is spoken.

All candidates showed genuine interest in their topic and pleasure in discussing it.

The fact that the exam is conducted by an external Examiner adds to the spontaneity of the discussion. Candidates have normally prepared their topic well, but they have to show the ability to handle their knowledge in a way to provide a coherent answer to the Examiner's largely unpredictable questions. In most instances the Examiner adopted the position of the "interested layman", which enables candidates to feel confident with their "expert" knowledge and does not make them feel under pressure to produce any expected answers.

Presentations were generally well timed and well articulated, leading naturally to discussion. 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.

Language (range and accuracy)

In terms of language, there was a wide range of competence. The majority of candidates were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. Accuracy was generally well controlled. 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, lack of control over agreements, gender and occasionally over verb endings.

Pronunciation and Intonation

Candidates appeared to master the sounds of Italian, is spite of the occasional misplaced stress and mispronunciation of double consonant or vowel sounds.

Conclusion

Most candidates appeared 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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Paper 9783/02

Reading and Listening

Key Messages

Reading section: candidates are required to target pieces of information sequentially, and subsequently to tailor an answer to the questions asked, occasionally using a degree of inference and justification or providing multiple points where necessary. Success in the translation question is dependent on being as directly faithful as possible to the original, whilst being as authentically Italian as possible too.

Listening section: again candidates needed to be able to follow information sequentially, and use the material heard selectively in order to answer the questions. Strong answers are concise and tailored directly to the question asked. In the summary question, high-scoring candidates kept to the word count and responded directly to the bullet points, correctly identifying the most salient points of the passage.

General Comments

The paper was generally well responded to.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1

Testo di lettura 1

Question 7

There was occasional confusion over which country this referred to or how to explain the connection.

Question 8

Strong candidates identified exactly which variety of 'arte urbana' was stated by the text to have been carried out by specifically '*giovani* fiorentini' and therefore got the mark.

Testo di lettura 2

Question 10

There was some confusion over the naming of centuries in Italian, leading to a variety of incorrect answers.

Question 14

Weaker answers explained who Buffett is rather than why he is referred to in connection with the castle.

Testo di lettura 3

Vocabulary was generally sound on this question; as in previous years, use of prepositions often differentiated good candidates from weaker ones.

Part 2

Brano d'ascolto 1

Generally well handled.

Brano d'ascolto 2

Question 26 and 32

As always in questions involving numbers and comparisons, very careful translation required!

Brano d'ascolto 3

Successful answers attempted to address all four points in a balanced way. The last point seemed to be more difficult for some candidates, perhaps due to the fact that this part is attributed to another speaker.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

| 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 evidence of this year, all candidates now know that they need to choose a Part I essay title which reflects their interests and that they then need to answer the question set. This suggests that they had been well prepared for the examination by their teachers. Candidates are also clearly familiar with the sort of questions they will face in Part II, but here it is advanced grammatical knowledge rather than technique alone that is required.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part I – Discursive Essay

As in previous years, the best essays here were coherently argued, well-illustrated answers which also demonstrated a familiarity with some of the more complex structures and vocabulary of the language. Even where candidates did not manage to advance quite such sophisticated arguments, they kept their focus on the question and invariably offered a conclusion which returned to it. As for the language, once again there was a little inconsistency in candidates' grasp of the basic (GCSE) grammar even at the top end of the ability range: this makes it all the more important for candidates to check their work carefully before handing it in.

Question 1

(a)   This was a popular choice among this year's candidates. The best answers engaged fully with the concept of *modelli da seguire* and identified both positive and negative examples. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the main source of these role models was considered to be the internet and social media, but other 'real life' examples were also offered, notably teachers. When discussing the influence of 'celebrities' on young people, some candidates were able to argue coherently that this can be positive and inspiring to an extent which is often beyond parents. The vast majority of candidates also showed – with varying degrees of conviction – that these celebrity role models have a dangerous influence on young people. All candidates reached the conclusion that parents are not irreplaceable but most seemed appreciative of the guidance they had themselves received from this source.

(b)   This was the most popular title, yielding a very satisfying range of views in response to the title statement. Some candidates defended parents' choice to send their children to private school, citing the sacrifices made in terms of work-life balance and seeing in this a convincing demonstration of parental love. Some even went as far as to say that the state's inability to provide equal opportunities for all was immoral. Other candidates argued that private schools are immoral at least to some extent, and many of these concluded that they should be abolished in order to establish a fairer society.

(c)   There were a few answers here. Most candidates thought that their parents' generation had not faced the same degree of competition for jobs and university places and therefore had not had quite such stressful lives – although some better-informed candidates did point out that in the post-war period and the economic dark days of the 1970s things had been more difficult than they are today. All candidates talked about the influence of technology, either as a source of stress – making everybody conscious of their image at all times as well as hyper-aware of their relative 'failures' – or as a means of sharing their feelings of stress and therefore feeling better. The best answers were able to include both angles.

(d)   There were a few answers here, and the range of quality was perhaps wider than on any other question. The best answers engaged fully with the idea that over-population was at the root of every other environmental problem – pollution, dwindling resources, climate change and so on. Many candidates concluded that individual and collective selfishness was more of a problem than over-population. Less successful answers dealt rather dismissively with the central issue of over-population before moving on to make more general points about environmental issues and their causes.

(e)   Too few candidates chose this title for any meaningful commentary.

Part II – Use of Italian

Many Candidates performed well in this section. **Exercise 3** was particularly well done, with the majority of candidates scoring at least six out of ten here. **Exercises 1** and **2** once again proved an effective differentiator, with the very best candidates scoring almost full marks and a number of candidates at the other end of the ability range hardly scoring any. Candidates showed some good familiarity with the imperfect subjunctive and the future tense but rather less familiarity on the whole with impersonal *si*, the verb *sopravvivere* and the passive.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

Paper 9783/04
Topics and Texts

Key Messages

To score well in this paper candidates should read the questions carefully and give due consideration to the second part of a two-part question. In addition, candidates should spend time planning which extracts from the books and films best exemplify their response to the question. Quotation for its own sake is not rewarded but accurately reproduced citations can be used effectively if they clearly illustrate a point.

General Comments

Candidates answered on three topics – *Gli Anni di piombo, La Malavita in Italia* and *Il Cinema di Nanni Moretti*. Familiarity with the plots and main themes of texts and films was generally good. Less successful answers were hindered either by lack of clarity due to a less confident command of the language or by an approach which was more descriptive than analytical. Candidates who referred in a detailed and balanced way to two sources generally did better than those who referred to all three in a more superficial manner.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1

Question 1

(a) and (b)

1(a) was a popular choice of question. Some candidates had a little difficulty interpreting the question and wrote about politics and religion as themes rather than as ideologies that motivated the characters' thoughts and actions. In fact, the second half of the question was often not explicitly addressed. Better candidates were able to write in impressive Italian about the historical context in which the writers/directors had located their work and many candidates confidently referred to concepts such as *la strategia della tensione*. Some candidates felt they had to talk about both religious and political ideologies which became a little tenuous in discussion of *Il contesto* and was not required. In **1(b)**, candidates were able to offer extended analyses of the theme of imprisonment in all three works. The argument that imprisonment could be as much psychological as physical was successfully made by several candidates who were able to cite, for example, how Moro's kidnappers were both physically restricted but also unable to escape their backgrounds, including their religious rituals. In discussion of *Morte Accidentale di un anarchico* some candidates were able to see that *Il Matto* reveals how the police, in addition to their role as gaolers, are imprisoned in their thinking by the ideology of the state. Candidates could perhaps have also referred to *Il Matto*'s claims of having been an inmate in a mental hospital where ironically he learned about the law. Less successful candidates were overly reliant on narration of events.

Question 3

(a) and (b)

Answers to these questions displayed good knowledge of *Romanzo Criminale* and *A ciascuno il suo.* Candidates were able, in **3(a)**, to discuss and exemplify the idea of mutual dependency in the criminal world. In **3(b)**, most candidates identified that poor backgrounds were a factor in the involvement in crime of the protagonists of *Romanzo Criminale* and that this was quite a different world from that of *A ciascuno il suo* where the all-pervasive influence of the mafia meant that the maintenance of wealth and power rather than the struggle to survive was the motivating force. Candidates could have considered in more detail the role played by the absence of a moral code in the pursuit of a criminal life.

Question 4

(a) and (b)

The vast majority of candidates opted for **Question 4(b)**, with varying success. *Messaggi* was quite often interpreted more broadly as *temi* and this therefore impacted on the candidates' success in answering the second part of the question. *Mezzi* was open to wide interpretation, with most candidates choosing episodes or characters in the films as Moretti's means of conveying his messages. Other answers cited specific cinematographic devices, such as the use of documentary footage. Occasionally answers referred to Moretti's success at conveying his *messaggi*, without saying what these were. In the answer to **4(a)** a number of different examples of *autorità* were proffered including the government/Berlusconi, the medical profession, and the role of parents in the family. The second part of the question often did not receive due attention.

Part 2

Question 6

(a) and (c)

No candidates attempted **6(b)**. The candidates who attempted the commentary **Question 6a** were able to identify it as the moment Dante meets his guide Virgil in Canto I and were able to discuss its significance to the work with much success, pointing out why Virgil was an appropriate choice of guide and why he would not be able to accompany Dante to *Paradiso*. Some attempt was made to comment on the poetic style of the passage, but this was not at a very sophisticated level. In **6(c)** candidates correctly cited examples of Dante's condemnation of individuals within the church while at the same time praising God's justice. Illustration extended to use of imagery in the poem.

Question 8

(a) and (b)

Answers to **Question 8(a)** were able to locate the passage in its context and to give a thorough account of how Goldoni uses comedy to depict the antagonistic relationship between Don Marzio and Ridolfo. Stubbornness and vanity were illustrated and more insightful answers cited the way in which Don Marzio's *occhialetto* is not merely an object of vanity but symbolic of his own failure of perception. **Question 8(b)** invited the candidate to analyse the character of Eugenio, which was mostly well done. There was perhaps a missed opportunity to discuss what such an observation tells us about Don Marzio.

Question 10

(a), (b) and (c)

Question 10(c) was the most popular question generating quite varied responses. The best offered a perceptive analysis of Augusta's role as a prism through which the reader gets a highlighted view of Zeno's inadequacies. There could have been more emphasis placed on how Augusta is essentially the antithesis to Zeno, an A to his Z, embodying health as opposed to sickness, and optimism versus introspection. Less successful were answers which dwelled on how Zeno had ended up marrying Augusta and did not offer much in the way of analysis or which spent time discussing Freudian psychoanalysis with little regard for the question. Such answers might have been better suited to 10(b), which was attempted by several candidates. The better answers alluded to Zeno's desire to find a father figure in Giovanni or a mother figure in Augusta. Some candidates cited Zeno's inability to give up smoking as evidence of his desire to remain a child, which was less convincing. Candidates could have discussed Zeno's refusal to accept responsibility for his actions or the desire for approval, particularly in the light of his lack of recognition by his own father. The commentary **Question 10(a)** elicited only a small number of responses which were able to accurate locate the passage and comment on Zeno's capacity for self-deception and Svevo's mockery of psychoanalysis.

Question 13

(a), (b) and (c)

Question 13(c) was by far the most popular question on the Calvino text. The term 'narrative style' was widely and loosely interpreted by candidates. It would have helped some candidates with the structure of their essay had they defined their understanding of the term first. There were some

very good responses which engaged with the second part of the question and offered a number of plausible reasons for the choice of a child narrator, such as the suspension of disbelief and the ability of a child to be a fly-on-the-wall observer, facilitated in this case by the freedom of association this narrator enjoys. Other plausible reasons which could have been offered concern the fable-like quality of the text and the space for adult interpretation of events. Quite a few responses were somewhat uneven, dwelling too much on descriptions of the child narrator and of events in the plot which did not clearly link to either part of the question. **Question 13(b)** produced largely descriptive and superficial responses, blaming the bad Medardo almost entirely for people's unhappiness. Candidates might have been expected to allude to the unhappiness brought about by the good Medardo's over-zealous altruism and the people's inability to accept it. Reference could also have been made to the Huguenots' unhappiness due to their religious beliefs. The commentary **Question 13(a)** is best attempted by candidates who are confident in analytic technique. Poor expression detracted from some good observations, which were also inadequately exemplified.