Questions matter

GCSE
Italian

8633/RH Paper 1 Reading Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

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General comments

This year's performance in the reading paper at Higher Tier was generally good and certainly comparable to the levels of achievement last year. It is possible that teachers have grown more accustomed to this specification and are therefore better able to prepare their students for the examination, especially with how they handle the more challenging questions, which in this Tier are the literary extracts, the F/T/NT formats (or the A, B, A+B questions), the news headline questions and the translation.

Overall, students appear to have dealt well with the majority of the questions in this paper and the mean was only very slightly lower compared to 2023.

Section A

Question 1

The text in this question was relatively straightforward. The question type combined two aspects students have found challenging in the past - a literary extract which they often find daunting and a T, F, NT question, which always tends to confuse some. Notwithstanding these two challenges, students did very well in this question this summer and over 70% scored all the 7 available marks. Part 1.5 (where the answer was N/T, usually the one many find difficult to identify) had the highest success rate in the entire question.

Question 2

The topic of technology is usually popular with young people as they can relate to the issues described.

Some students who did not score a mark in this question, were often on the right path for the correct answer. For example, in part 2.1, where the answer was "the use of laptops has decreased", quite a lot wrote "Italians use their phone or tablet". This did not score a mark as the sentence needed to include a comparison or reference to laptops, such as "they're using their phone or tablet more than their laptops". The previous answer on its own does not answer the question.

Part 2.2 was generally successful, with only a small minority guessing their answers (such as "they're portable"). Most appear to have understood and managed to add a reference to ordering food/take aways/shopping online.

Part 2.3 saw some students losing the mark for simply writing "the time spent on the smartphone". This answer was incomplete as it lacked any reference to the fact that time spent on the smartphone has increased.

In part 2.4, a small number of students lost the mark for using "they" instead of "their children", which could be interpreted as referring to the parents themselves and was therefore rejected.

Part 2.5 saw a significant number of students lose the mark due to incorrect phrasing. Just one letter (**S**) made a big difference in scoring the mark. "Keeping in touch" or "keeping contact", were acceptable responses but "keeping contact**s**" did not score the mark since although very close to the correct answer in spelling, it actually means something completely different.

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Question 3

It is the first year that this question on news headlines scored so well overall. The vast majority of students answered all parts of the question correctly, apart from 3.5, where around 47% scored a mark.

This question type remains quite challenging because a larger number of headlines are given that students can select from, so guessing rather than understanding is not really an option. The vocabulary tested in this question can also span from several topic areas and tends to be aimed at the Higher grades. Considering what has been written about questions of this type in past reports, it is possible that teachers are including them more in their class/examination practice sessions and students are becoming more familiar with the format.

However, for part 3.5 (keeping the streets safe), where the answer was F, almost 50% of students chose E, this could be due to the fact that both "sicuro" and "strada" appeared in that particular headline.

Question 4

There was also a positive success rate in this question. Social Issues is usually one of the least popular topics, where students tend to score fewer marks. This was not the case this year. It was a challenging question, aimed at the more able students, so with that in mind, it is particularly pleasing that so many students answered it correctly.

Question 5

Although the topic of free time is popular with students, this was a challenging question. The texts dealt with the plot of films which rendered the vocabulary more difficult to access for many (eg regista, intervistato, tifosi, etc). The question format used can also be problematic, not so much when the answer is A or B but students tend to struggle more with A+B questions. These are the sections of this question which scored fewer marks, particularly 5.2 where more than half answered A (*un uomo solo abbia raggiunto il cuore di tante persone)* when the correct answer was both A+B (in B, the text reads *ogni singolo giocatore intervistato lo ricorda con amore, sottolineando il ruolo cruciale che ha avuto nella sua vita).*

Part 5.1 also scored slightly less well. Although the majority of students answered correctly, a significant proportion answered A+B, due to the fact that both texts contain references to football (however in the first text, the man interviewed "*voleva diventare un calciatore professionista"* but ended up becoming "*regista");* this clearly confused some students.

Question 6

This was one of the most challenging questions in the entire paper; students appeared to be more able in providing precise answers, which resulted in a majority scoring the mark for part 6.1. The mark was lost when only one specific item from the list was selected as the answer, eg: "about helping abandoned animals" which was incorrect. However, "volunteering", "helping others", "helping people and animals" were all shorter but acceptable answers.

Part 6.2 did not pose many problems, with students being able to list either one or all the benefits. Part 6.3 saw some students lose the mark for focusing on the incorrect detail, giving the answer "because they have to pay for pens and books" rather than the fact that "the cost of the items is the same for everyone (rich and poor)" which is the correct response.

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Question 7

The text on Milan was challenging and aimed at the top students.
Students did very well here in general. A small minority lost the mark for the disadvantage as they did not add the important detail "you can do a lot of things in a single day". If the part specifying that so many activities can be done *in one day* was missing, then students lost the mark.

The text on Rome had more issues, particularly with the second mark which was the disadvantage where several vague or incorrect answers were produced such as "no public transport".

Section B

Question 8

This was the most successful question in the entire paper. Though a literary extract, Ammaniti's *Io non ho paura* is known for its easily accessible language style, and the dialogue often tends to be delivered in short, simple sentences. This is certainly the case in the conversation between Michele and his sister, which is part of this extract. It is not surprising that no parts of this overlap question posed problems and over 90% of students scored full marks.

Question 9

This question tested knowledge of the holiday topic but also featured the three time frames; it was quite well answered, around 67% of students scored both marks in part 9.1. The verbs and the time adverbs in the text could have assisted students with comprehension (*qualche giorno fa* and *domani*).

Part 9.2 scored slightly better with an extra 10% achieving both the available marks. It is to be noted that a small number of students here lost all the marks for giving the correct answers in English rather than in Italian, which does tend to happen every year. **It is vital that students read the entire question and are clear on which language to answer in.**

Question 10

Most students were able to identify the correct answers in this question about relationships and marriage (B and D), and when this was not the case, the most common answer given together with D was A (*Marisa ha già organizzato le nozze*). It is possible that these students did not know the meaning of "*nozze*" which is a synonym for *matrimonio* and was therefore an educated guess for some.

Similarly for part 10.2, when students did not select C and D as the correct answers, the most common answer was A (*è meglio vivere insieme prima di sposarsi*) and again it seems to have been a random guess considering the opinion Toni expresses in the text is in fact the opposite of that statement (*non sono per niente a favore della convivenza*).

Question 11

This question on smart working was fairly challenging in terms of topic, but quite relatable in dealing with changes that have happened everywhere in the world of work in particular in the UK. All parts of the question scored well apart from part 11.5 where over a third of students selected the wrong answer (C - *in*

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ufficio e a casa). Some students were unable to tell the difference between "più della metà" and "alcuni tra di loro".

Section C

Question 12

A small percentage of students scored full marks in the translation this year, however, there was an increase in the translation success rate with over 16% scoring 8/9. The structure with the present perfect was translated correctly by most this year.

Section 1

This part posed no particular issues though occasionally some students lost the mark for omitting the **S** in *month**s**,* or being imprecise with the phrase "a couple of months" which was not accepted.

Section 2

The part that caused quite a few problems in this section was the translation of the verb "trovare" which was quite frequently translated as "to find a friend"; the friend wasn't lost, of course, so this was rejected as it was a literal translation, though verbs that conveyed the correct meaning such as *meet, see* and *visit* were all accepted.

Section 3

This was the problematic section of the translation which prevented the vast majority from scoring full marks. The presence of "*libreria*" and "*di fronte*" caused issues – when students translated one correctly, they tended to miss the mark for the other. While more students recognised that *libreria* is a bookshop and not a library, the one which they found most confusing was "*di fronte*" which was translated as in front of instead of opposite.

It is vital that cognates of this kind are dealt with in class during grammar/vocabulary acquisitions lessons and examination practice sessions, so students are better prepared for them.

Section 4

This was well translated by most; we also accepted the phrase in the present tense (*we know each other from school* rather than *we met at school)* as it is an expression often used in English to convey the same idea. Though the tense was not exactly what was asked for, it was awarded a mark as the meaning was accurately conveyed.

Section 5

There were not many problems with this section though a small minority lost the mark for translating the verb *aveva* as "*when he had fifteen years"* which of course makes no sense in English and was not accepted.

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Section 6

This was also fairly well translated. If students lost marks in this section, it was due to omitting one of the verbs, often the modal *"è dovuto".* So, if the translation given was "*he went to live in Germany*," without "*he had to*", the mark was lost. All three verbs needed to be expressed for the mark.

Section 7

This is the present perfect structure. After many years of appearing in the translation and being conveyed incorrectly in English in the present tense, it was well translated by most students this year. Past paper practice and teachers having read past reports with care will have ensured this error was not repeated this year.

Section 8

A nicely translated section by most, with only a couple of phrases posing problems for a minority of students; "*per fortuna*" was translated as "*for luck*" by some, and "*giugno*" as "July" by others.

Section 9

No problems were posed by this last short phrase which was known and well translated by almost everyone.

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Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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