

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Italian (6IN03)
Paper 1A

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Summer 2013

Publications Code US036290

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Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response in Italian

General Introduction

This unit requires candidates to use the language of **debate** and **argument** to discuss the issue of their choice; to defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher-examiner moves the conversation away from their chosen issue covering **two unpredictable** areas of discussion. The topic of debate does not have to relate to the General Topic Area listed in the specification for AS or A2. This unit assess advanced level understanding as well as speaking skills.

Assessment Principles

A maximum of **50** marks will be awarded using the assessment criteria for each of the following categories:

Response (20 marks)

There are three descriptors in this box:

Spontaneity: a genuine, spontaneous conversation will have minimal hesitations, allowing time to think, and then explain.

Range of lexis: a good range of lexis and sentence structures pertinent to the issues discussed.

Abstract language: a discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive.

Quality of Language (7 marks)

Communicating without loss of message and frequency of basic errors not interfering as to be a distraction.

Reading and Research (7 marks)

What is required is evidence that the candidate has read extensively and in some depth.

Comprehension and Development (16 marks)

There are two descriptors in this box:

Comprehension: understand all the implications of the questions. Listening skills are tested in the unit and this does have a significant impact for the way in which questions are formulated and asked.

Development: respond demonstrating understanding, taking the initiative and moving the discussion forward.

Assessment information

Format

Candidates are required to choose and **prepare an issue**, on which they must **adopt a stance**. They must complete the oral chosen issue form with a brief statement, of the issue to debate, in Italian. It is therefore advisable to choose a confrontational issue, to which a stance can be taken.

The first section is a debate and requires candidates to present and take a **clear** stance on any issue of their choice. The examiner then plays the role of devil's advocate, expressing views contrary to those of the candidate, being careful to avoid an aggressive or confrontational tone.

There is no requirement to relate the initial issue to the culture and society of the target language and/or any of the general topic areas for this specification. Candidates may select any viable issue to debate.

Timing is crucial!

It is difficult for candidates to access the highest marks if the correct timing is not adhered to. The test begins with the candidate outlining their stance for about **1** minute. The teacher-examiner then challenges it and the candidate must defend it in discussion for **3-4** minutes. For the remaining **8** minutes, the teacher-examiner initiates a spontaneous discussion on **two** further issues, **moving away** from the chosen one onto unpredictable areas.

It can aid the candidate to say: "*ora passiamo a un altro argomento*"; where it is not mentioned, the candidate may reply still referring to the debate, thus making the debate on the issue much longer. Candidates are expected to express and justify opinions, argue a case, discuss problems or current controversies as they arise naturally in spontaneous conversation. It is possible for candidates to gain high marks in the first part of the test, because they are on familiar ground. Candidates should be aware that the topic chosen should be one for which there are two possible sides to the argument. Teacher-examiners should verify in advance that the topic is an appropriate one; otherwise, marks can be lost unnecessarily.

It is problematical to argue opposing to:

- I cambiamenti tra arte classica e arte contemporanea
- Il nuovo ruolo della donna
- La salute
- Una regione – Emilia Romagna

The unpredictable areas are more complex; these should be really unforeseen topics. Rehearsed and recited quantities of material cannot gain high marks. The difference between well prepared material and recited material is not difficult to detect often from intonation.

The second part of the test should be a spontaneous discussion, not just a question and answer session covering too many topics, asking too many factual questions and/or a general chitchat:

"Cyberbullismo, ne sai qualcosa?- Mi racconti un po' della tua famiglia! - Parlami di... - Paragona... - Fai l'analisi della situazione - Descrivimi... - Che cosa sai di...?"

The two unpredictable areas for the second part of the exam can be chosen from the General Topic Areas for A2 but also from the General Topic Area for AS. However, for a candidate to obtain higher marks the AS topics, covered at A2, **should clearly indicate progression**.

Candidates' Responses

In this summer examination, the majority of candidates were thoroughly prepared. Unfortunately in a number of stage-managed conversations candidates' performances suffered as a result.

In a small number of cases teacher examiners did not challenge the initial issue adequately, asked irrelevant personal questions or reverted to the AS format for the second part of the

examination. In a minority of cases, AS and A2 type of questioning merged, questions were repetitive or ended up to be too personal. Occasionally too much time was spent on the chosen issue and consequently there was no evidence of further unpredictable areas being explored or the initial debate went on far too long resulting in the final two or three minutes of the discussion being a manic exchange of questions and answers. In a few cases, the teacher-examiner followed no guidelines and focused on purely factual and personal details. The variety of questions was at times limited, especially when many candidates chose the same stance. Some teachers talked too much and insisted on voicing opinions. In a significant number of cases, native speakers were given mundane questions, which did not allow them to display debating skills. In addition, sometimes they were asked fewer questions bringing the exam at an earlier close, resulting in a loss of marks. Teacher-examiners must conduct the test in accordance with the guidelines that are set in the Oral Training Guide. Misinterpretation in conducting the exam for example; timings of the test, lack of administration of the exam, and insufficient questioning can disadvantage candidates even when they are prepared.

Teachers are advised to prepare a wide variety of topics, so that each candidate has something different to debate. If there are only few topics used for the discussion, it can appear as if these have been well prepared in advance and are not precisely unpredictable. In contrast to this, most teacher-examiners were excellent in opposing the candidates' views and eliciting good debate throughout the exam.

The most interesting debates showed extensive reading of newspaper articles on current affairs within topic areas like politics, environmental issues, emigration, euthanasia, nuclear power.

Some interesting stances on the following topics:

- *Voto ai carcerati*
- *L'uso dei tablet nelle scuole*
- *Le donne nella chiesa*
- *Beppe Grillo, solo un comico*
- *Dire bugie non è immorale*
- *La richiesta di prestiti in Europa*
- *Matrimonio tra omosessuali (a great number)*
- *Importanza ed effetti della tecnologia sui giovani (a great number)*
- *Aborto*
- *Uso delle droghe nello sport e legalizzazione della cannabis*
- *Caccia*
- *Chirurgia estetica*
- *Eutanasia*
- *A favore del sussidio governativo delle arti in Inghilterra*
- *A favore della politica cinese del figlio unico*
- *A favore di incentivi per i giovani imprenditori in Italia*
- *I contributi della ricerca scientifica non sono sempre positivi*
- *Contro i treni ad alta velocità*

Debates that reflected current issues related to crime and society were performed successfully when students were able to combine relevant factual knowledge with abstract concepts. For example, debating the **death penalty** the issue was approached from a variety of angles: ethical issues reflecting the ways societies respond to crime and unravelling ideas related to the role of governments towards their citizens; the impact of technology in its function to reduce acts of injustice.

Another topic which generated interest and energetic debate was **immigration** and its link with the gradual disintegration of European cultures - in the same way many argued that globalization was destroying craftsmanship, national identity and made strong links with the effect of multinational companies on less developed countries in mark contrast to the positive image of globalization.

The **Environment and climate change** was an increasingly popular topic this year with many candidates arguing that climate changes were part of natural cycles of evolution and the need to adapt to these changes rather than spend time investigating the causes.

Religion was a controversial and popular topic this year debating the impact on Italian society, focusing on the role of the Church and its impact on political decisions, particularly its ability to obstruct or hijack decisions on contemporary issues revolving around homosexuality, adoption, gay marriage, contraception, abortion and genetic manipulation. Integration and acceptance of Muslim communities and beliefs was also a much debated issue.

Education and technology and the development of **social networks** were both extremely popular topics, and discussions revolved around the way our entertainment, life-styles and the world of work are continuing to change rapidly and how our bodies physically and mentally will need to change to accommodate such developments.

The most popular unpredictable areas were:

eutanasia

legalizzazione delle droghe di classe C

terrorismo,

razzismo,

immigrazione,

pena di morte,

aborto,

bioetica e cellule staminali - ricerca, benefici, problemi

testamento biologico - questione morale

religione - diversita' e tolleranza

energia nucleare, difficolta' a trovare un accordo. Vantaggi e svantaggi

sperimentazione farmacologica sugli animali

giovani e politica

libertà di stampa

integrazione dei mussulmani nelle comunità europee

salute mentale e risposta della società

controllo della satira politica e religiosa

declino morale nello sport

rigenerazione di aree povere e tagli all'arte

libertà di acquistare e portare armi

cambiamento del ruolo della donna e difficoltà nel mondo del lavoro

pressione dei media sui giovani

Quality of language

Although in some cases accuracy was variable, many candidates achieved at least 5 marks. There were also examples of candidates without an Italian background whose oral

performance was highly accurate.

Pronunciation was generally good although intonation and stress were often rather less convincing for words such as: *viaggiano*, *violano*, *vedere*, *fotografia*, *barbaro*, *anorressia*, *pedofili*.

Most common mistakes:

orfanato - rimasto orfano

adoptare - to adopt

essere in contro/essere al contrario - to be against

travagliare - to work

predicire - to predict

spendato - spent

esplodare - to explode

mortalita' femminile - women's mortality rate

danneggioso - harmful

simbolare - to symbolize

campagnare - to campaign

rimanare - to remain

il rato delle nascite - birth rate

i vittimi - victims

i scienziati/i giovani

la crimine/la sistema/la problema/la corpa/ i media/i midia/ la media/ la tema

i lavoratori - workers / i lavoratori minoranti

il razzismo - racism

pedofilo/elementario/dinaro/capabile

la fattoria - factory

le chimiche - chemicals

lo sdrupo - rape

la moderanza - moderation/la disperanza - lack of hope

la significanza - the significance

una legge soffice

un'addetta alle droghe - drug addict

analfabetato - illiterate

la perdita - loss

abortione - abortion

Agreements (*i personi, i genti*)

Wrong tenses

Wrong use of prepositions

Relative pronouns

"If" clauses not used properly

Subjunctive not always used when needed.

Problems arose when using modal verbs or constructions with fare + verb : . *dovrebbe*

hanno..., *fare pulito...*,

potrebbero fanno ...

GOOD use of linking words such as: *tuttavia*, *da un lato e dall'altro lato*; *infatti*; *pur...*; *tutto sommato*.

Reading and Research

Candidates were able to achieve 5 to 6 marks through reference to articles, books, and internet sources, offering detail and convincing opinion. Many candidates' responses showed extensive reading of newspaper articles on current affairs within topic areas like: politics, environmental issues, immigration, euthanasia and nuclear power. Can we remind

candidates and teachers that to show extensive reading and research on the issue is not sufficient to say: "Ho letto un articolo nel giornale o in Internet...".

Comprehension and Development

Some very interesting and challenging questions, which allowed a natural and logic interaction with the teacher-examiner, taking into consideration the fact this unit assesses advanced-level understanding as well as speaking skills.

Teacher-Examiners

Candidates' success in Unit 3 is dependent on a good conduct of the exam as the quality of debate depends very much on the teacher examiner's counter-arguments for the chosen issue and the nature of the questions asked for the further issues. Whilst thanking many examiners who conducted the exam successfully, listed below are some areas for improvement, which could develop the skills of teacher examiners.

Sometimes Edexcel examiners are faced by the difficulty to determine whether in the discussion there are two further issues or only one. One example is the following:

Debate: *contro la chirurgia estetica per bellezza.*

Questions in part 2: *i genitori devono essere più amici o più severi? Quali cambiamenti ci sono stati nella famiglia? Quale modello coregge di più? Il genitore ideale come dovrebbe essere? Cosa pensi dei matrimoni tra omosessuali? E delle coppie di fatto?*

Equally, this is another example of an exam that doesn't move away from the issue of the debate:

Debate: *la Chiesa cattolica fa più male che bene.*

Questions in part 2: *I giovani interrano la religione? È giusto avere scuole religiose? Le religioni causano guerre? La religione ha ancora un ruolo nella società moderna? Le società con diversi gruppi religiosi fomentano il razzismo? Di chi è colpa il razzismo?*

The following is an example of a well conducted exam:

Debate: *non ci sono abbastanza informazioni sul fumo.*

Further questions on two clearly distinct topics:

a) genitori e figli: *fino a che punto si può limitare un figlio? Secondo te tanti giovani hanno troppa libertà? Ci sono più problemi a causa di questa libertà? Pensi che la criminalità sia uno di questi? Per alcuni giovani la criminalità è quasi un divertimento...*

b) la donna: *come donna cosa vorresti fare nel futuro? La madre ha ancora un ruolo importante nella vita dei figli? C'è pressione sulle donne per carriera, bellezza e maternità? Può una donna adempiere al ruolo di madre se lavora tutto il giorno? Una donna deve scegliere tra carriera e famiglia?*

The following is another example of some good questions:

Issue: *sono a favore dell'immigrazione*

Counter-arguments:

- 1. Quando si è in una situazione di grave crisi economica, come per esempio quella in cui l'Italia si trova in questo momento, le tensioni sociali tendono ad essere molto più forti e chiaramente i problemi si acutizzano ed in particolare si pensa che questi immigrati creino dei problemi e che si dovrebbero chiudere i confini per salvaguardare i nativi. Cosa ne pensi?*
- 2. Se gli immigrati non hanno un'occupazione legale saranno costretti a vivere ai margini della società quindi ad essere al di fuori della legge...*
- 3. Considera il peso che questi immigrati hanno sui servizi sociali: scuole, ospedali, ecc.*

4. *Veramente questi immigrati vogliono integrarsi con la società ospitante? Spesso restano, ma si automarginano restando confinati nelle loro comunità e mantenendo usi e costumi spesso in contrasto con le leggi locali.*

Passiamo ad un altro argomento...razzismo...

Some examples of poor questions:

- cosa sai sulla pena di morte
- parlatemi dell'aborto

Centres must note that if they employ Italian native speakers (and not teachers) to conduct the exam, they should make sure that all the important information on the conduct of the tests are understood to avoid later disappointments. Centres without a teacher could ask information about the possibility to use Centre London Orals for their candidates.

The teacher examiner should see the oral form before undertaking the conduct of the oral and should prepare valid counterarguments to avoid silences. For the debate to be interesting the counterarguments must be well focused. Not only should candidates be well prepared but also their teachers. The all too frequent "*Dimmi cosa sai di...– Sei a favore o contro?*" are likely to produce a weak debate.

After about **5** minutes the TE should initiate a spontaneous discussion covering **two** further issues. A number of teacher-examiners did not follow the requirements to explore at least two further unpredictable issues. If a TE covers just one issue then the mark for Response, Reading & Research and Comprehension & Development are reduced. Although examiners are not required to take the opposite view in the unpredictable areas, inputs like "*Cambiamo argomento; **che cosa sai su...?***" will not prompt a high level of debate or be considered a complex and challenging question; complexity can be linguistic (language and structure) and/or conceptual (abstraction).

A small number of teacher-examiners are not aware of the requirements, treating the second part of the test more as a conversation rather than a discussion and causing candidates to lose marks. The role of teacher-examiners is not to ask questions to elicit factual information, although the candidate might well refer to some factual information to help to support and justify a point of view.

Some teacher-examiners mistakenly introduced too many issues without allowing any in depth discussion. It is acceptable to move on if a candidate is unable to discuss a topic and might handle another issue better, but a string of issues only just touched upon is not likely to show the candidate's ability to sustain the discussion. Long monologues learnt and recited by heart without interruption will demonstrate a lack of spontaneity and this could affect the mark given for Response and Comprehension and Development.

Teacher-examiners must remember that a good debate depends very much on the challenge that they put to the candidates, both for the chosen and unpredictable issues. If candidates are prepared regularly in the art of debate and discussion, they will almost certainly do well.

To recap the most frequent problems were:

- initial issue not always arguable
- stance not challenged enough by the teacher-examiner
- some question on summer holidays or personal life not appropriate for this unit
- too many factual questions not designed to elicit opinions
- questions at GCSE level
- only one topic discussed after initial issue

- no further topics
- difficulties to establish the two unpredictable areas as questions were all within the issue chosen by the candidate
- Candidates not allowed to demonstrate debating skills.

Administration

Some issues arising from the administration of the test can be summarised as follow:

- recording equipment tested and in good working order, but microphone moved away from the candidate during the test, resulting in almost inaudible recording on tape
- some background noise and/or other sounds (the bell, telephone, mobile phones, etc.) which made candidates lose concentration
- no name or number of candidates on the box or cassette
- stance not clear and/or written in English
- exam either too long or too short
- old Oral Topic Form OR3
- incomplete Oral Topic Form OR3
- no attendance registers sent
- badly damaged CD's and cassettes.

Sound quality of CDs is excellent, although examiners need to know, for the sake of efficiency, if a given CD needs to be run on computer or on a simple CD player. Centres should wrap CDs in an appropriate plastic box, as for cassettes, or at least in a padded envelope.

Advice and Guidance

Teachers-examiners should:

- make sure that the issue is clearly stated and a stance is taken
- prepare challenging counterarguments
- debate the chosen issue for the time required, but no longer
- introduce two further issues
- exploit all the potential of subsequent issues
- keep the debate going
- remember that eliciting knowledge or talking about personal experiences can take up valuable time
- in the interest of candidates, teacher-examiners are advised to scrupulously adhere to administrative procedures.

Candidates should:

- select an issue that is of genuine personal interest
- adopt a stance and be ready to defend it
- be prepared to be engaged in a free-ranging discussion of further issues for the remaining 8 minutes.

Conclusion

Congratulations to teachers and candidates!

This summer exams were very well conducted in several centres. Many candidates performed well in this examination and appear to have worked thoroughly to prepare themselves. The facility to contact any of the Principal Examiners through the Ask the Expert service is offered to the centres. An online Oral Training Guide is also accessible.

Centres are reminded of the Edexcel Notice to Centres on the website to inform them that **audio cassettes will no longer be accepted for assessment** after September 2014.

Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

The timing of the test begins the moment the candidate starts the presentation.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

5-8	Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.
9-12	Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts.
13-16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.

If a candidate would have scored 12, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. This adjustment should not be applied to 'Quality of language' or 'Reading and research'.

Tests that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not have a debatable or defensible issue

e.g. where the candidate does not present or defend a definite stance, or the teacher-examiner fails to give the candidate an opportunity to justify their opinions.

- Candidates will be limited to scoring a maximum of 4 for 'Reading and Research'.
- This may affect the marks given for 'Comprehension and Development'.

Tests that do not move away from initial issue/topic

e.g. further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered and/or a monologue.

- Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

Response	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 12 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 8 marks

Reading and research	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 4 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 3 marks

Comprehension and development	
Only one unpredictable area discussed	No more than 10 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 7 marks

Tests that are pre-learnt

Pre-learnt is defined as a performance which is largely recited and may demonstrate very little spontaneity and impaired intonation. Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see 'Response' grid.

- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

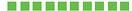
Pre-learnt tests may also affect the mark given for 'Comprehension and Development' if it does not permit a natural and logical interaction.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwant to/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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