

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Italian (6IN03) Paper 1A
Spoken response (TE)

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GCE - ITALIAN 6IN03 – SUMMER 2015

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. 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** on 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 is very helpful if the TE clearly indicates a move to the second part of the exam by saying: "**ora passiamo a un altro argomento**". If this is not mentioned, the candidate may lose marks by continuing to elaborate on the initial issue.

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.

The following are examples of unsuitable issues with which to develop a debate:

- *Why many people do not care about education and future*
- *De Andre's music*
- *Unemployment in Italy*
- *Pro education*
- *Italian educational system*
- *Problems caused by mafia*

The unpredictable areas are more complex; these should be **genuinely unforeseen** topics. **Rehearsed and recited** quantities of material cannot gain high marks. The difference between well prepared material and recited material is easy to detect often from speed, reaction and 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 chat.

Some examples of inappropriate questions for this Unit:

- *Parlami di Fabrizio De Andre*
- *Parlami dei diritti delle donne*
- *Cos'hai votato la settimana scorsa?*
- *Tua madre e tua nonna hanno la stessa opinione sulle donne?*
- *Perche' ti piacciono le macchine?*
- *Tu mangi sano?*

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 and TEs followed scrupulously the guidelines for conducting the oral tests. **Well done!**

The A2 oral examinations for 2015 showed, in many cases, an excellent level of spoken Italian, a considerable number of non-native candidates scoring very commendable marks. There were few problems in the way the examinations were conducted, and most schools were aware of the time limit. Some teacher examiners very sensibly announced the division between the initial issue for debate and the two further topics for discussion, possibly to keep themselves on track. There were a number of examples, this year, of a teacher examiner speaking more than the candidate. This should be avoided. Some examiners tend to ask their questions too slowly, which can discourage some candidates. It is probably better simply to speak clearly and naturally. Some teacher examiners leave too long a pause between each question. The problem with this is that it leaves the candidate wondering just how much more he is supposed to say. Whilst the candidate was

allowed a free choice in terms of the initial issue for debate, it was clear that some topics lend themselves to debate more easily than others. Some topics were, intellectually, simply less demanding.

There was clear evidence that well-planned questions led to debates that were interesting and engaging. When questions were far too generic, the debate broke down and did not progress. In a minority of cases this led to reverting back to the original stance to attempt to add detail.

In a minority of cases teachers tried to explore far too many topics, limiting each one to one or two closed questions and quickly moving on. This strategy did not allow candidates to demonstrate their skills and perform at their best. Similarly, some teachers did not interrupt their students and by doing this, the second part of the examination consisted mainly of a monologue.

Unfortunately in a small number of cases teacher examiners:

- let the candidates speak for 4/5 minutes to outline the issue instead of 1 m. and the test did not move away from initial issue
- conducted an exam without initial debate
- did not challenge the candidate on his/her stance in the first part of test
- asked factual questions not designed to elicit opinions
- did not initiate a spontaneous discussion in the second part but stated the title of each subtopic area and asked a list of questions mainly factual not designed to elicit opinions
- covered only one unpredictable area in the discussion or no unpredictable areas were discussed.

To recap:

- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- native speakers were given mundane questions, which did not allow them to display debating skills.
- sometimes candidates were asked fewer questions bringing the exam to an earlier close, resulting in a loss of marks.
- In a small but significant number of cases, the teacher appeared unprepared and questioning was too generic and restrictive.
- Teachers' linguistic competence was, in a few cases, inadequate.

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.

Many candidates' responses 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:

- *against gastric elastics*
- *pro more freedom for youngsters*
- *pro women's equality*
- *pro healthy living*
- *against new citizenship testing*
- *against use of technology*
- *against immediate citizenship to immigrants*
- *against private school*
- *pro illegal music downloading*
- *against minors' work*
- *against savage animals kept as pets*
- *against violence in football*
- *against burqa*
- *against minimum wage*
- *against vulgarity in pop music*

The issue must be **clear** and written in the **target language**:

- *bisogna eliminare l'ONU*
- *pro motorizzazione a 14 anni*
- *disturbi mentali e criminalità non sono collegati*
- *contro la partecipazione dei bambini nei talent show*
- *contro l'alimentazione forzata agli anorressici*
- *contro i concorsi di bellezza*
- *contro la Monarchia*

Debates that reflected current issues were performed successfully when students were able to combine relevant factual knowledge with abstract concepts. This is an example:

Issue: *Sono contrario alla pena di morte.*

Introduction: *Vorrei parlare della pena di morte. Io sono molto contrario perché penso che sia una soluzione antiquata, spietata e sproporzionata. Innanzitutto le statistiche mostrano che non è un deterrente efficace perché negli USA gli stati con il tasso di omicidi più alto – Louisiana, Alabama, Missisipi – sono tutti stati che utilizzano la pena di morte. Da ciò si può dedurre che non è un deterrente efficace, perché la pena di morte non riduce la criminalità violenta. Inoltre potrebbe portare alle morti ingiuste, per esempio nel 1991 Carl Winingham è stato arrestato con sospetto di incendio doloso e omicidio delle sue tre figlie. E' stato giustiziato nel 2004, ma nuove prove hanno dimostrato che l'incendio avrebbe potuto essere solo un incidente, quindi la condanna potrebbe essere stata ingiusta.*

Debate:

T: Va bene quello che dici, ma che alternativa si potrebbe proporre allora?

C: *Come alternativa suggerisco l'ergastolo invece della pena di morte perché offre l'opportunità ai criminali di riflettere sul loro crimine e include la riabilitazione e possono pensare a quello che hanno fatto*

T: Però è raro che l'ergastolo sia tale, molto spesso viene condonato o ridotto

C: *Si penso che questo sia giusto perché lo scopo della prigione non dovrebbe essere solo quello della punizione, ma di offrire la possibilità di reintegrarsi nella società. L'ergastolo completo vieta questo diritto alle persone*

T: Ma non credi che la vita in prigione non sia abbastanza severa per riuscire a riabilitare davvero e favorire un autentico reintegro del criminale nella società?

C: *Non penso che sia una questione del livello di punizione, le prigioni dovrebbero essere giudicate per la riabilitazione*

T: Ma come affrontare il problema di coloro che usciti di prigione ritornano a commettere lo stesso crimine?

C: *Si ammetto che esista questo problema che le persone vanno in prigione e non vengono riabilite e commettono gli stessi reati dopo essere state rilasciate, ma penso che il governo debba fare di più per garantire questa riabilitazione, fornendo più informazione riguardo alle conseguenze delle azioni, perché una più grande consapevolezza delle conseguenze scoraggerebbe molti ...*

T: **Ma la famiglia alla quale viene tolto un figlio, cioè ucciso, non merita di vedere la morte di chi ha commesso il crimine?**

C: *Certamente penso che la famiglia meriti un certo livello di soddisfazione, ma molte famiglie di vittime hanno detto che la pena di morte non fornisce questa soddisfazione, perché la pena di morte viene vista come una soluzione facile per un criminale, perché devono passare solo 5 o 10 anni in prigione ...*

The most popular **unpredictable areas** of discussion for the second part of the exam were:

- *famiglia tradizionale*
- *matrimoni ed adozioni da parte di omosessuali*
- *tecnologia*
- *eutanasia*
- *legalizzazione delle droghe leggere*
- *terrorismo,*
- *razzismo,*
- *immigrazione,*
- *aborto,*
- *moda*
- *scuola/università*
- *parità tra uomo e donna*
- *energia nucleare/energie rinnovabili*
- *sport e società*
- *obesità/anoressia/bulimia*
- *fumo/droga/alcol*
- *pena di morte*

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.

The use of object pronouns tends to be more difficult even than the use of the subjunctive and, this year, among weaker candidates, there has been no noticeable improvement. Nonetheless, in broad terms, many candidates gave an able performance as regards accuracy and had an adequate command of the use of the subjunctive. Sometimes this knowledge of the subjunctive remained theoretical and in practice, verbs of feeling, for example, were often followed by the indicative when the subjunctive might have been better. Expressions of the type “**è logico che**” and “**è naturale che**” were frequently used throughout the test but were often incorrectly followed by the indicative. Some students were unaware that the conditional of verbs of wanting is followed by the imperfect subjunctive, not the present e.g. **il governo conservatore vorrebbe che ci fosse.....** Some weaker candidates were still insecure in their knowledge of grammar associated with GCSE. Thus, the definite article and the possessive adjective both caused problems. Some candidates do not distinguish between “**miglio**” and “**migliore**”. Some candidates, too, were unaware, perhaps through the interference of other languages, that the Italian for “**bad**” is “**cattivo**” and not “**male**” or the Italian for “**cool**” is “**fantastico, bello, mitico, forte**” (the use of “*fico, figo*” is a colloquialism not very elegant) . Unlike in French, it is not possible, in Italian, to take your lead from the teacher examiner’s verb form. A student cannot simply answer “**io vorresti andare....**” because the examiner has asked “**dove vorresti andare dopo gli esami?...**”. There were a number of GCSE-type mistakes, for example modal verbs were sometimes not

followed by the infinitive. Some candidates did not distinguish between “**chi**” and “**che**”, assuming that they were interchangeable. Maybe because English has only a single form of the definite article, the correct use of the definite article in Italian appears to be random. Where a student had to use a word with which he was not too familiar, the associated article was often merely a guess with no distinction between, for instance, the correct use of “**gli studenti**” and the incorrect use of “**i studenti**”. Largely because English has only one form for a given adjective, some students simply ignore adjectival endings. Some candidates, including some teacher examiners, continue to use the particle “**di**” where it is not necessary. It was not uncommon to hear “**è importante di ricordare**”, or “**è necessario di fare**”, probably among those familiar with French.

Some students are also vague in their use of verbs taking a preposition or conversely taking no preposition. Some students seem unaware that “**decidere**” is followed by “**di**”, whereas “**aiutare**” takes “**a**”. Essentially, the student needs to know the Italian grammar for what he would naturally say in English.

Despite what is said above, many candidates were happy to show just how competent their knowledge of Italian was – examples such as “**benche**” readily followed by the subjunctive, “**nonostante sia molto difficile, se il governo avesse preso le misure necessarie.....non sarebbe stato così difficile.....**”

Most common mistakes:

- Agreements
- Wrong use of prepositions
- Relative pronouns
- hypothetical constructions
- Sequence of tenses
- Passive voice
- Verb forms/auxiliaries

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.

Most candidates are aware that for a successful debate they will need to have researched their chosen topic carefully. Many debates were carried out with a good level of repartee between candidate and teacher examiner. They are to be commended on their hard work in this aspect of their studies. In some cases, possibly because of insufficient drive on the part of the teacher examiner, the debate tended, in part, towards a simple presentation.

There continues to be a good number of native Italian speakers who enrol for the examination and their language competence is usually obvious throughout the oral test. Their native competence did not always allow them, however, to score highly in the section Reading and Research. Some teacher examiners were tempted, whilst discussing a popular topic –*adoption of children in same sex relationships*– to revert to family life and involve the candidate in a more extended, simple conversation about their own family. This took up time and reduced the level to that of GCSE.

Can we remind candidates and teachers that to show extensive reading and research on the issue, it is not sufficient to say: “**Ho letto un articolo nel giornale o in Internet...**”.

Comprehension and Development

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

Some teacher examiners were able to take their line of questioning to quite demanding levels and equally some candidates were able to respond appropriately to certain questions in considerable depth. In many cases they were able to respond at a high level to questions relating, for example, to social justice, imprisonment, religion and politics. They were also able to engage in moral debate. Where, however, the

topic for discussion was less demanding, this had implications for the mark that could be awarded, both in terms of comprehension and in terms of development.

Teacher-Examiners

Candidates' success in Unit 3 is dependent on the good conduct of the exam, as the quality of debate depends very much on the teacher examiner's counterarguments for the chosen issue and the nature of the questions asked for the further issues. Sometimes Edexcel examiners are faced by the difficulty to determine whether in the discussion there are two further issues or only one.

Whilst thanking many examiners who conducted the exam successfully, we would like to encourage others to improve and develop the skills of the teacher examiners.

Some examples of good questions:

- Meno nascite e anziani che vivono piu' a lungo. Quali sono gli effetti di questi cambiamenti demografici sull'organizzazione sociale?
- Uomini e donne hanno diversi ruoli sociali?
- C'e' ancora discriminazione delle donne nel mondo del lavoro?
- L'esodo in massa nel Mediterraneo è solo una responsabilità dei paesi dell'Europa del sud?
- È più crudele lasciar soffrire una persona o farla morire?
- Che importanza ha la religione nel nostro secolo?
- È giusto che la sanità pubblica debba occuparsi di persone che fanno abuso di alcol, droga e fumo?
- Cosa pensi degli interventi militari nei paesi del medio oriente?
- I graffiti sono una forma d'arte o di vandalismo?
- Fino a che punto l'immigrazione e la violenza sarebbero collegate?
- Esistono elementi positivi connessi all'immigrazione?
- Come nasce la violenza giovanile?
- Mi interessa sapere se sui social media sarebbe giusto dire tutto ciò che si pensa?
- Che interesse hanno i giovani nella politica oggi?
- I giovani di oggi come affrontano il grave problema della disoccupazione?
- Secondo te fino a che punto gli omosessuali hanno raggiunto una parità di diritti nella nostra società?
- La moda viene spesso imposta alla gente, nel modo di vestire e di essere: pensi che ci si possa sottrarre a questa imposizione?
- Che tipo di persona ricorre all'intervento plastico?
- Fino a che punto siamo responsabili delle catastrofi naturali?
- Immagini di modelle troppo magre sono consuete e largamente diffuse, credi sia facile riconoscere i sintomi dei problemi di alimentazione?
- Oggigiorno si viaggia molto grazie ai low cost: credi che sia una buona cosa?
- Fino a che punto i mass media influenzano la vita che viviamo?

To avoid later disappointments, centres must note that if they employ Italian native speakers (and not qualified teachers) to conduct the exam, they **should make sure that all the important information on the conduct of the tests is understood**. On the other hand, any TE conducting the test **should have a good knowledge of the language**. Centres without a teacher could ask information about the possibility to use Centre London Orals for their candidates.

The teacher examiner should study 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. Both the candidates and their examiners should be well prepared.

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 marks 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).

As in the past examination series, a small number of teacher-examiners were 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 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.

Good examples:

Religione: *è fonte di guerra o di pace? – Ha risolto o ha aumentato i problemi? – La presenza della Santa sede ha un’influenza positiva sulla società italiana? Come dovrebbe essere insegnata a scuola?*

Istruzione: *secondo te la scuola prepara al futuro? – Da dove arriva la disciplina? - La tecnologia in classe distrae più che essere utile? – Se non c’è il voto, cosa spinge uno studente a studiare?*

To recap the most frequent problems were:

- initial issue not always arguable
- stance not challenged enough by the teacher-examiner
- some questions on 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 follows:

- during recording 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 CD
- no teacher/examiner name on the box or CD
- 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 CDs.
- CDs for the 01 and the 03 examination in the same parcel.

Sound quality of CDs is excellent, although examiners need to know, for the sake of efficiency, if a given CD needs to be played on computer or on a simple CD player.

Centres should wrap CDs in an appropriate plastic box or at least in a padded envelope.

TAPES ARE NOT ACCEPTED.

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.

Grade Boundaries

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

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