

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Italian (6IN01) Paper 1A

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6IN01 Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Italian

In this Unit candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of a short Italian text (linked to one of the general topic areas of the AS specification) and to engage in general discussion on the same topic area. The candidates' understanding of the text is tested by 4 questions posed by their teacher/examiner (TE), who then develops the conversation into a more general discussion of the topic area chosen by the candidate before the test. The general topic areas are as follows:

Youth culture and concerns

Lifestyle: health and fitness

The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Italian-speaking world

Education and employment

Candidates are free to choose any of the four general topic areas, according to their preference and interests. They should be advised to choose a topic area with which they are familiar and which they are prepared to discuss in detail. They will need to research their chosen area and undertake reading from a variety of sources. Candidates are given 15 minutes prior to their examination to prepare their stimulus text. During this time, they should study the text with a view to answering questions about it, offering their opinions about the subject of the text and the related subtopic and to discussing the subject of the text in more detail. The Oral form, (see Appendix 1 in the specification), must be completed with the general topic area chosen by the candidate and the number of the stimulus used.

Assessment Principles

Up to **50** marks are awarded positively using the appropriate grids for **Quality of Language** (**16** marks, **8** for **Accuracy** and **8** for **Range of Lexis**), **Response** (**20** marks) and **Understanding** (**14** marks, **4** **Stimulus specific** and **10** related to the **General Topic area**)

Candidates' Responses

The majority of centres that entered candidates for the new AS oral examination in Italian should, in general terms, be congratulated on the thoroughness of their preparation. Many centres kept to the spirit of the examination, in allowing candidates to speak in a natural way within the broad topic area of discussion.

As in previous years a good number of candidates reached commendable levels of linguistic competence. Many candidates were able to sustain their discussion well and offer interesting slants in their opinion of given topics.

There were still some cases of over rehearsal, although fewer centres appear to have tried this approach than had been the case in the past.

The importance of spontaneity must be stressed in relation to performances that can only be described as:

- stage-managed, in which candidates have learned everything by heart for the whole of Part B and at times spend an agonizing 8

minutes regurgitating information, often leaving out bits so that the conversation becomes largely meaningless.

- monologue, with little or no teacher participation.
- one centre one topic, when a class had studied the same topic and TE rotates the same unpredictable questions to all candidates (all of whom had learned the answers more or less well).

This is often done in complete good faith but the lack of spontaneity severely limits the marks for Response. The repetition of language, often far above candidates' real level of competence, can only result in poor levels of accuracy.

PART A

Generally speaking, weaker candidates found it difficult to give a report of the content of the text without quoting verbatim from it. In some cases, they simply read the relevant chunks of the stimulus, making it difficult to assess their actual understanding. Some better candidates had been encouraged to give full answers to Q1 and pre-empted Q2. Q3 and 4, being more general, were answered well by better candidates, who put forward very interesting opinions and ideas and produced well developed answers. These questions also showed up the weaknesses of other candidates, who performed better in part B, as they had been able to prepare this. Some candidates offered little expansion and did not cover the required time needed to be spent on the first part of the oral exam.

PART B

This was on the whole well done, and candidates seemed less inclined to simply deliver pre-learnt material. The better performances were more markedly dependent on language skills. Still, even candidates with just a modicum of language acquisition beyond GCSE level could adequately express some ideas and opinions about one or two topic areas despite faulty grammar and sometimes a fairly limited vocabulary and even attempted a stab at the conditional and the subjunctive.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

This seemed to be the least popular topic area.

Both stimuli were answered well and prompted interesting discussion, although some candidates answered question two in their response to question one and were left slightly confused.

General discussion on Education was often very good, with candidates seeming well informed about and engaged with the topic. The main discussions revolved around the cost of university education and the phenomenon known as "fuga dei cervelli" and interesting debates emerged using questions such as: "What are the qualities that a good university should have? - What are the issues when choosing university?" There were also some nice discussions of proposed changes to university funding and the value of higher education.

Stimulus 1A

Q2 Many students talked about the advantages of Gisella's job but forgot about the disadvantages and in some cases the TE had to prompt them to get the full answer.

Q3 Some candidates did not understand that the question asked for reasons why the job of lorry driver is still considered a job for men but just replied that they agreed that it is a job for men.

Stimulus 2B

Q2 The answer to this question could have been: a. there will be 6 different types of liceo; b. an increase in the number of lessons of Latin and foreign languages and the introduction of lessons taught in the foreign language.

THE WORLD AROUND US

Stimulus 2A

Q1 and 2 did not cause any problem even for the weaker candidates.

Q3 gave candidate the possibilities of expressing their views against nuclear power and to talk about the recent problems in Japan. There were some very good answers to this question.

Q4 Also gave candidates the opportunity to say what they do to reduce the energy consumptions. There were some very good answers for this question, too.

Environmental questions were either very specific and technical or, in contrast, very bland. This topic produced a plethora of complex, pre-learnt material and at times very ordinary responses, moving away from a discussion/debating style and adopting a lecture-style response. Students discussed, among other topics, the impact of tourism and the changes in the way people travel and choose their holidays.

YOUTH CULTURE AND CONCERNS

Once again, a very popular topic area.

Stimulus 1

Q3 Some candidate misunderstood the words *incoraggiare/scoraggiare*, and consequently gave wrong answers.

Stimulus 2B

Q1 Some candidates' answer to this question mentioned the solution rather than the problem.

Q3 Some of the weaker students did not understand that this question referred to technology in general rather than facial recognition.

There were many interesting discussions on fashion and on ethical topics linked to fashion. Many candidates debated family bonds and expectations looking at relationships between family members. The role of music was an emerging topic focusing on the technological developments and the value and opportunities to watch live music. Students were also ready to offer interesting and different views on the "siti sociali".

LIFESTYLE, HEALTH AND FITNESS

Another very popular topic area.

Stimulus 1

Q1 Weaker candidates did not mention the replacement of crisps and sweet vending machine with fruit vending machine, but only mentioned the replacement of sweets with fruit.

Q2 Weaker candidates did not understand this question and did not say what the result of the project was but what the project involved (82 secondary schools and 42,000 students rather than the fact that now students eat more fruit for a snack even when they are in school.)

Q3 and Q4 were generally answered well. In the general conversation, many candidates talked about the importance of healthy eating, discussed eating disorders like anorexia with a broader view which explored the psychological side rather than focusing on media pressure and models' eating habits. The discussions were better researched and meaningful this year. Open questions tended to elicit better discussions when the students were given opportunities to cross over topics (i.e. healthy living through sensible choice of food but also considering the role of sport and physical activity in general). Several students also made interesting comments on the impact of technology in sport.

Candidates' performance in terms of linguistic criteria did not differ greatly from the previous exam series: the range was wide and well distributed, from very good performances – above specification requirements – to a moderate but nevertheless an extension of the linguistic skills required at GCSE level.

The range of lexis was good or even very good, but structures were very often limited and repetitive, with a large number of candidates not attempting any subordinate clauses. In the few case of scripted material, structures were often too complex for the candidates' ability and resulted in very flawed performances with marked differences between Parts A and B. Accuracy about agreements, gender and often verbs endings is still a problem even with stronger candidates and errors in word stress remain frequent.

Common errors were:

'*avantaggi*' instead of *vantaggi* ; '*disvantaggi*' instead of *svantaggi*;
confusion between the use of *migliore* and *meglio*, *peggiore* and *peggio*,
buono and *bene*, *cattivo* and *male* (i.e. the use of adjectives instead of
adverbs and viceversa);
'*la governa*' instead of *il governo*; '*la problema*' instead of *il problema*; '*una
resulta*' instead of *un risultato*;
'*preventare*' instead of *prevenire*; '*accessare*' instead of *accedere*;
'*lavatori*' instead of *lavoratori*; '*il tiramoto*' instead of *il terremoto*;
incorrect use of *piacere*

Teacher Examiners (TE)

The exams were generally well conducted: the majority of TE and their candidates did extremely well. It was evident that a good number of TE had conscientiously prepared their candidates' topics eliciting very good performances from their students. However, there are some TE who tend to keep the conversation within the level of factual knowledge rather than encouraging the expression of opinions and discussion.

Administration

There were some problems with the timing: in some cases the examinations were either too short or too long, but the most recurrent problem was the insufficient time given to Part A. In a minority of cases, it was obvious that the stimulus-related questions had been known to the candidates before they were asked by the TE, and even this part took the form of a regurgitation of pre-learnt material.

Another recurrent problem was the rephrasing and/or expansion of the stimulus-related questions.

This is regrettable, as it ultimately has an adverse effect on the candidates, and it must be reiterated that, in the interest of fairness and comparability, candidates will be penalised if the examinations do not take place according to the specifications. It is therefore imperative that centres ensure that TE are familiar with the prescriptions which govern the conduct of the oral examination.

Finally, some centres did not include the oral form or the register and some did not use the correct stimulus.

Quality of recording was generally good but there were still isolated cases where exams were inaudible. Centres must ensure that recording equipment is in good order so that the recordings made are of good quality and can be marked.

Advice and guidance

Detailed advice and guidance can be derived from comments made throughout the report. In particular:

- candidates should choose a general topic area which reflects their personal interest
- the material should not only involve factual knowledge but also include opinion
- candidates should be prepared to give full and extended answers to the stimulus-related questions
- candidates should plan and prepare, not memorise, the discussion in Part B.

Teacher examiners should:

- use the correct stimulus
- ask the 4 stimulus-related questions as they appear on the card, without re-phrasing or expanding them
- elicit opinions and not test for factual knowledge only
- ensure that sufficient time is devoted to Part A
- move away from the topic of Part A to more general discussion of the topic area
- ask genuine unpredictable questions related to the chosen topic
- give a hesitant candidate the chance to respond but don't correct or interrupt

Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 7 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

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

- 'Quality of Language – Accuracy'
- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis'
- 'Response'

e.g.

4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

If a candidate would have scored 7, they should be given 5, if they would have scored 6, they should be given 4. This will not affect the other assessment criteria 'Understanding – Stimulus specific' or 'Understanding – General Topic Area'.

Test that are too long

Once the 10 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not move away from initial input

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

- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis' – limited to a maximum of 3 marks
- 'Response' – limited to a maximum of 8 marks
- 'Understanding - General topic area' – cannot score more than 0

Please note:

Understanding – Stimulus specific should only be used to mark **Section A** of the oral test.

Understanding – General topic area should only be used to mark **Section B** of the oral test

When marking the oral exam, examiners are advised to immediately allocate a mark for Section A, prior allocating marks for the rest of the test (Section B).

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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>

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