Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Italian (9IN0) Paper 3A
Speaking

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Introduction

2019 marked the first year this A-level Italian oral was set under the revised specification. Many candidates showed they had a native or near-native command of the language. Among standard British students the level of language proficiency was also of a good standard and the general understanding of themes and sub-themes was of a commendable level. Where there was a choice, relatively few candidates opted for sub-themes associated with Mussolini, but where they did so, they were able to argue effectively and in detail.
As this is the first Principal Examiner's report for the new specification it is perhaps important to review and clarify different aspects of this new qualification.

The specification

In the new A Level speaking examination, students should be able to demonstrate:
● knowledge and understanding of the cultural context by giving ideas, examples and information on one of the themes and on a chosen subject of interest they have researched linked to the social and cultural context of the language studied;
● the ability to analyse aspects of the cultural context by presenting and justifying valid arguments, viewpoints and conclusions;
● the ability to interact and hold a natural and fluent discourse;
● skill in manipulating language accurately;
● the ability to respond to written language in speech.

These aspects are assessed via two distinct tasks conducted entirely in Italian, which are carried out in consecutive order in one session.

Task 1 (discussion on a theme)

Content for this task will be based on any one of the twelve sub-themes from one of the four overall themes listed on *pages 8–9* of the specification.

Students have approximately **6 to 7** minutes discussion time for this task.

There are TWO parts to the discussion:

Part 1: The Teacher/Examiner asks the two compulsory questions on the card. The Teacher/Examiner then helps to develop the discussion by asking appropriate follow-up questions relating to the statement on the stimulus card.

Part 2: The Teacher/Examiner then broadens the discussion to cover **other aspects of the overall theme**. Teacher/Examiner must ask questions to enable the student to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria, i.e. to elicit examples and information to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the cultural and social context and to analyse aspects of the theme by developing and justifying arguments and forming conclusions.

Task 2 (presentation and discussion on student's independent research project)
This task is in two parts. Content for this task will be based on the subject of interest that students have chosen for their independent research project. This may be based on any of the four themes of study listed on *pages 8–9* of the specification or on a subject of interest of the student's choosing. However, it **must** relate to the Italian-speaking cultural and social context.
Students have approximately **10** to **11** minutes for this task.

Part 1: The discussion must open with a presentation from the student in which they provide a summary **of at least two of the written sources** they have used as part of their research, outlining the authors' main points/ideas and giving a personal response to what they have read. In this part of the task, students are assessed on their ability to respond in speech to written sources.
The presentation must not exceed two minutes.

Part 2: The discussion must be broadened out to a wider exploration of the content of the student's presentation and of their research. The Teacher/Examiner must use the key findings and list of sources on Form RP3 to help them formulate their own questions to enable the student to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria, i.e. to elicit examples and information to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the cultural and social context and to analyse aspects of their research by developing and justifying arguments and forming conclusions.
In both tasks, students are expected to ask questions that elicit opinions as part of the natural discourse and to confirm that their own points of view have been understood. Students are also expected to take the lead in the discussions.

The **key features** of this examination are:
- It is firmly rooted in Italian society and culture
- There are prescribed topic areas for task 1 and two compulsory questions, relating to the statement that the candidate has chosen, which the teacher-examiner must ask in the order they are presented
- There is no issue to debate. Candidates and teachers are no long required to defend positions.
- There is a need for candidates to elicits points of view and check examiners 'understanding, naturally and appropriately, at different points during the discussion
- The presentation of the independent research for task 2 must clearly reference specific named sources, written in Italian.
- The new examination is between 5 and 7 minutes longer than the legacy assessment.

Assessment Principles
Three mark grids are applied to Task 1 and Task 2
● knowledge and understanding of society and culture (AO4)
● accuracy and range of language (AO3)
● interaction (AO1).

One mark grid is applied to part 1 of task 2: responding to written language in speech (AO2).

A01 – Interaction – Task 1 and 2
This mark grid assesses students' ability to interact with the examiner by giving relevant responses based on what they have heard, by initiating communication and eliciting points of view.
The interaction is awarded up to 6 marks.
Teacher-examiners and candidates must remember that asking a question does not automatically place the performance in any of the three mark bands. Interaction provides a picture of how much the candidate participated in the discussion.

A03 – Accuracy and range of language – Task 1 and 2
This mark grid assesses students' ability to use a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary to produce articulate communication with a range of expression. It also assesses students' accuracy of pronunciation, grammar and syntax. Candidates are judged on their competence in making themselves understood, showing how able they are at conveying a message without its meaning being compromised by errors that hinder clarity.
Accuracy and Range of Language is awarded up to 12 marks.

A04 – Knowledge and Understanding of Italian-speaking society and culture – Task 1 and 2
This grid assesses students' ability to communicate information about and demonstrate appreciation of different aspects of Italian-speaking culture and society.
They are also assessed on their ability to respond critically and analytically to different aspects of Italian-speaking culture and society by selecting relevant material, presenting and justifying points of view, developing arguments, supporting their ideas with examples.
 Knowledge and Understanding of Italian-speaking society and culture is awarded 12 marks.

A02 - Responding to written language in speech – Task 2 (Part 1)
This grid is used to assess the student's two-minute presentation **only**. It is not applied to the discussion that follows the presentation. This mark grid assesses students' ability to understand and respond in speech to written language drawn from a variety of sources and to summarise information from written sources in speech. The written sources will be those that students read as part of their

independent research and they **must refer** to at least **two** named written sources during their presentation.

Responding to written language in speech is awarded 12 marks.
Responses that refer to just one single written source can be awarded a maximum of 3 marks only.

Candidate performance

Task 1 -Students who were able to opt for Stimulus one and Stimulus two had an easier time in presenting their views and arguments in the sense that the sub-themes of family and education represent a world in which they themselves live daily.

For some students, who during their lives may have migrated to Italy and then Great Britain, Stimulus eight on the theme of immigration proved to be a theme with which they were very familiar.

Fewer candidates opted for stimulus cards 10 to 12, but those that did spoke exceptionally well and had a detailed knowledge of the required period of history. Much effort had obviously gone into their preparation.

The following is an example of a good performance. (Task 1 – Stimulus IN1).
TE and candidate seems to have a natural conversation, which flows moving gradually and naturally from 'nonni' to families to work to education.

TE: Q1
Candidate: *Secondo me i nonni spesso badano ai nipoti perché ambo i genitori lavorano, nella situazione economica italiana, in questo momento, spesso tutti e due i genitori hanno bisogno di lavorare. Lei pensa che è vero?*
TE: *Si sono d'accordo. Q2*
C: *Si penso che la situazione è cambiata molta. Nel passato gli anziani erano molti rispettati nella famiglia e spesso vivevano con i figli ed i figli dovevano badare agli anziani ma oggi i nonni sono sempre più usati come babysitter e non c'è lo stesso sentito del rispetto secondo me, perché oggi i nonni devono badare per i nipoti e sono trattati con un meno livello del rispetto*
TE: *Secondo te è una cosa buona che i bambini vengano curati dai nonni o è meglio usare una babysitter o una creche o un asilo?*
C: *Ci sono vantaggi e svantaggi perché i nonni spesso danno molto ai nipoti e non c'è lo stesso disciplina, per esempio, come i genitori, ma anche i nonni sono un'opzione molto più economica per i genitori perché gli asili nidi sono molto costosi e molte volte sono troppo lontani da casa per i genitori ed i nonni possono prendere i bambini dalla scuola quando i genitori rimangono in ufficio*
TE: *Mi sai dire com'e cambiata la famiglia italiana negli ultimi 20 anni?*
C: *Ci sono molti differenzi perché nel passato le donne italiane avevano molti figli, la tassa dei figli nel 1950 è 5 figli per donna ma oggi è molto più basso una donna come media ha solo 1,2 bambini e per questo la popolazione italiana sta invecchiando molto e anche il numero di famiglie nucleari è calato molto perché ci sono tanti tipi differenti della famiglia in Italia per esempio famiglia omosessuali, famiglie di razze miste*
TE: *Mi hai detto che nascono pochi bambini, quali sono le conseguenze maggiori di questo?*

C: Per me la conseguenza maggiore è che non ci sono i giovani per badare agli anziani e la popolazione che invecchia non è una cosa buona per l'economia perché non ci sono abbastanza giovani per lavorare e pagare le tasse e questo causa molti problemi per l'Italia. Lei è d'accordo come me?
TE: Sono francamente d'accordo con te. Ci sono tanti giovani in Italia che preferiscono rimanere in casa a vivere con i genitori, qual è la ragione di questo; perché in altri paesi europei non è così?
C: Ci sono tanti mammoni in Italia e per me penso che non c'è lo stesso fenomeno negli altri paesi europei perché l'Italia ha una cultura della mamma e del rimanere a casa e per questo molti giovani si sentono molto a casa.
TE: Sono solo queste le ragioni o ci sono altre ragioni?
C: Ci sono tanti ragioni, specialmente la situazione economica c'è molta disoccupazione specialmente giovanile e per questo molti giovani non ha una decisione e devono rimanere con i loro genitori perché hanno i soldi per avere il loro casa
TE: E secondo te andare a vivere all'estero è una buona cosa per molti giovani italiani?
C: Penso che spesso è una buona scelta per un giovane ma non è una buona scelta per l'Italia come un paese perché questa fuga dei cervelli è che molte persone istruite viaggiano all'estero e per questo la situazione accademica italiana è peggiore...

Task 2 - The second part of the oral test proved to be more difficult, both in terms of what was required in the first two minutes of this second part of the test and in what followed. Some candidates and teacher examiners were unaware that the students had to refer in the presentation to the sources used during their research.

Some candidates chose very interesting topics for their presentation. These included "the role of FIAT in the Italian economy", "the slow food movement", "the impact of Italian fashion around the world" and "racism in Italian football". However, teachers should warn candidates against choosing topics that do not allow them to critically analyse aspects of the Italian culture and society. In many cases, students chose to talk about an Italian city, poet or artist for their research project, and whilst they did do a lot of research, the focus of their presentation was on describing tourist attractions, or the poet/artist's work and their life, instead of looking perhaps at the impact of their work in the society of their time. Teachers/Examiners should also make sure that they avoid, in these cases, asking questions such as "what is your favourite monument in...?", or "what is your favourite painting/literary work by...?", as these types of questions do not allow candidates to move on from simple descriptions.

Teachers/Examiners should also make sure that the follow up questions they ask are relevant to the research project or other related issues. In many cases, it was evident that teachers/examiners had not prepared their questions in advance, which resulted in pauses and questions generally lacking breadth in Task 2.

Interaction
It was not unusual for a candidate to reach a score of at least 4, and very often 5 or 6. Nor was interaction a problem in part two of the test, particularly where candidates had devoted enough time to their research question or statement. The mark for interaction encourages spontaneity in oral response and there were few examples of over rehearsal in what candidates generally had to say.

Responding to written language in speech

For many candidates, this section of the oral test which carried 12 marks and referred only to the presentation, was the most difficult and daunting part of the whole oral examination. Marks were lost in part for not quoting sources or quoting only one source and/or by giving a summary of sources used, without expressing a considered opinion. Owing to this a fair number of candidates lost all awardable marks, a problem which might need to be addressed before the 2020 examination.

Accuracy and range of language

Accuracy was not generally a problem for those candidates with a native or near-native command of the language. These candidates usually scored marks between 10 and 12.
Some students of British origin sometimes found it hard to combine fluency with accuracy. Accuracy with these candidates was less successful and the correct use of the subjunctive, particularly with verbs of thinking, was not always respected. Not all candidates found adjectival agreement easy, particularly where the associated noun ended with –e and there was confusion as to whether the noun might be masculine or feminine. The same problem occurred with feminine plural nouns ending in –i.
Despite language errors, most students were comfortably within the band 7-9, all the more since the range of language used was often good and of an idiomatic kind.

Some common mistakes:
•   english interferences: ha affettato; è stato bannato (banned);
•   wrong use of definite article: i italiani, i studenti
•   no use of definite articles (Italia, Inghilterra)
•   false friends: confidenza (sicurezza); fattoria (factory)
•   la famiglia non possono; la scuola devono…
•   mo' (adesso)

Knowledge and understanding of Italian-speaking society and culture

Apart from candidates who chose very generic topics for their research question or statement, most students achieved a commendable mark in this section of the oral test, many being awarded a score of at least 9. Candidates embraced the

wealth of cultural background information with obvious enthusiasm and they are to be congratulated, in many instances, on the richness of detail in which they were able to present their views in both part one and part two of the test. There was a feeling, however, that in some instances the research question or statement lacked cultural and intellectual depth and rigour.

Conduct and administration

Overall the exams were well conducted, especially considering this was a new examination.

Most candidates spoke spontaneously, showing a good knowledge of Italian society and culture and their research projects were examples of outstanding work.

The following suggestions may help to improve the conduct of the exam:

Task 1

- **Task 1 part 1**: Students should give succinct answers to Q1 and Q2; there should be at least one follow-on question relating to the sub-theme of the stimulus card for Task 1 part 1
- **Task 1 part 2**: must move away from the sub-theme of the stimulus card and cover at least one other sub theme within the same overall theme
- Keep **focus** on Italian world in Task 1
- Teacher-examiners' responses should be kept to a **minimum**
- If the examiner asks if there is anything the candidate wishes to ask him/her, this is **not** credited in interaction.
- **Comparison** with other societies should be strictly limited to avoid drifting into irrelevance in terms of the Italian context
- The **timing** of task 1 is recommended to be 6-7 minutes

Task 2

- **Two** minutes is the time limit for the presentation in task 2 part 1
- **Task 2 (Part 1)** in the presentation the students must provide a **summary** of at least **two** of the **Italian** written sources they have used as part of their research, outlining the **authors' main points/ideas** and giving a **personal response** to what they have read.
- The teacher-examiner should use the **key findings** and list of sources on Form Independent research form (RP3) to help them formulate their own questions.
- When conducting the examination teacher examiners should only **move** to another key finding when the student appears to have no more to say
- It is possible that the conversation could develop naturally and digress from the bullet points which is acceptable
- **The timing** of task 2 is recommended to be 10-11 minutes (2 minutes presentation- 8-9 minutes discussion)

Students will not receive any marks for any conversation that takes place beyond 18 minutes (total assessment time for task 1 and 2).
Administration

Timing
Task 1: 6 to 7 minutes (recommended)
Task 2: 10 to 11 minutes (recommended)
Total assessment time: 21 to 23 minutes, (16 to 18 minutes of speaking plus 5 minutes' preparation time for Task 1).
The timing of the assessment begins with the student's first utterance in relation to Task 1.
Once the maximum stipulated assessment time has passed (18 minutes) examiners will turn off the recording device at that point.
Students will not receive any marks for any conversation that takes place beyond the maximum time allowed.

Forms and documentation
The following forms should be included in the parcel sent to the examiner:
- A Level Italian RP3 form – to provide information for Task 2
- CS3 – candidate speaking authentication sheet – declaration and authorisation form signed
- OR4AL form to record the marks will be completed by examiner
- Register (even if there is only one absent candidate in the Centre)

Recording

- Place the microphone closer to the candidate
- Use the best quality recording equipment that is available.
- If possible record the candidate exam as an MP3
- Centres MUST NOT zip files or encrypt media. There is not such a requirement, and this has made it very time consuming for the examiners to access the media sent. If the CD or USB is encrypted send the password to the examiner with the parcel.

Final comments

Congratulations to teachers and candidates!

This summer exams were very well conducted in several centres.
Many candidates seem to have embraced the demands of the new examination syllabus with enthusiasm and with careful and thorough preparation.
The more serious nature of the new topics has led to more thoughtful responses on the part of the candidates.
This would not have been possible without considerable effort on the part of their teachers.

NB: Although it is anticipated that most students would prefer orals to be conducted by a teacher in their Centre, Pearson offer a London Centre Orals service for not taught students. Please refer to the administrative support guides on the relevant language qualification pages for more information. These appear under the 'Forms and Administration' section.