

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE Italian (6IN03) Paper 1A

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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 assesses 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)

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:

- *Sono a favore della ricerca scientifica*
- *A favore della fiducia tra genitori e figli.*

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 easy 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:

" Dove vai in vacanza di solito?", "Cosa fai per stare in forma?", "Quali materie preferisci?", "Cosa ne sai dei primi governi italiani del dopoguerra", "Hai letto un romanzo della Ginzburg quest'anno, cosa mi sai dire di lei?"," Quando? Dove? Perchè? In che anno?"

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. Occasionally too much time was spent on the chosen issue and consequently there was no evidence of further unpredictable areas being explored.

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.

On a few occasions teacher examiners overlapped questions, asking two different questions at the same time and therefore putting the candidate in a vulnerable position.

The variety of questions was at times limited especially when many candidates chose the same stance. 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 revolved around:

- Multiculturalismo
- Punizione corporale e violenza come mezzo per riportare l'ordine
- Questioni etiche legate a tradizioni che coinvolgono l'uccisione degli animali (corrida, caccia alla volpe, pellicce etc.)
- Musicoterapia
- Cambiamenti nello sport
- L'integrazione dei mussulmani nella società britannica
- Il diritto a manifestare
- L'indipendenza della Scozia
- Religione come causa di conflitti sociali
- "Patrimonio artistico" Conservazione e Sostenibilità
- "Energia nucleare" difficoltà a trovare un accordo.
- La condizione di sottosviluppo dei paesi del terzo mondo dovuta alla volontà dei paesi industrializzati
- La monarchia, un'istituzione superata

- Sperimentazione farmacologica sugli animali
- Tutela del patrimonio artistico italiano
- Boicottare la vendita della coca cola per ragioni etiche e ambientali
- L'arte del Rinascimento più autorevole dell'arte moderna
- I mass media hanno troppo potere e dovrebbero essere controllati in modo più efficace
- Contro i concorsi di bellezza per i bambini.
- La globalizzazione e le sue conseguenze catastrofiche sia a livello economico che culturale
- I graffiti come arte urbana

On the topic of sport, candidates were most successful when debate was well-researched and they were able to identify a variety of balanced arguments stimulated by their passion for the topic and being willing to discuss the topic beyond the "headlines".

In many cases, when debate revolved around scientific issues such as genetic engineering, candidates were able to tackle abstract concepts more readily and developed interesting arguments as often these topics suited the scientific mind.

On the topics relating to violence, a development was noted in the way candidates avoided stereotypical responses and were aware that they didn't always need to provide a quick answer, but explore alternatives.

The Globalization debate exposed candidates' general awareness that it causes loss of identity, and an erosion of culture and typical traditions rather than the economic benefits and a better standard of living.

The most popular unpredictable topics were:

- Euthanasia
- legalisation of C class drugs,
- terrorism,
- nuclear power,
- sustainable development,
- equality,
- racism,
- immigration,
- capital punishment,
- abortion,
- euthanasia
- mafia,
- GMO in agriculture.

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: *eutanasia*; *provoca*; *ipocriti*; *guidare*; *fotografi*; *alcol (alcol)*; *chirurgia (chirurgia)*; *ciarchere (carcere)*.

Most common mistakes:

Grammar

- agreements
- wrong tenses
- wrong use of prepositions
- relative pronouns
- use of subjunctive or if clauses
- Lessico
- *Turchesi* - turchi
- *Più peggiore/più meglio*
- *Chi* - che
- *La clima, la problema, la tema, la cinema, la media*
- *Diventare peggio* - peggiorare
- *Le due* - entrambi
- *Attitudini* - atteggiamenti
- *Benefico* - beneficio
- *Qualificazione* - qualifica
- *Affettare* – influire su, incidere su, avere effetto su; toccare, interessare, concernere, riguardare; colpire, commuovere; attaccare
- *orfanato* - orfano
- *sono al contrario/sono incontro-* sono contro
- *travagliare* - lavorare
- *predicire* - predire
- *arricciano* - arricchiscono
- *soluzionare* - *trovare una soluzione/* risolvere
- *simbolare* - simboleggiare
- *spendere/spendato* - spendere/speso
- *elementario* - elementare
- *danneggioso* - dannoso
- *capabile* - capace
- *additto alle droghe* - tossicodipendente
- *il rato delle nascite* - il tasso/numero delle nascite
- *mortalità femminile* - femminile
- *il dinaro* - denaro
- *i giovani* - giovani
- *una cosa malo* - una cosa negativa
- *un crime* - un crimine
- *i vittime* - le vittime
- *ingiustazione* - ingiustizia
- *la corpa* - il corpo
- *la significanza* - il significato
- *la crescita* - la crescita
- *la disperanza* - la disperazione
- *lo sdrupo/strupo* - lo stupro
- *un perilo* - un pericolo.

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, emigration, euthanasia and nuclear power.

Comprehension and development

Some very interesting and challenging questions on:

- Il libro elettronico fino a che punto può sostituire quello tradizionale?
- Qual'è il ruolo della scienza nella nostra società?
- Fino a che punto si può interferire con la natura, con la clonazione o la programmazione genetica?
- Fino a che punto la cultura americana influisce su quella europea e con quali conseguenze?
- Quale è il ruolo pubblico e l'impegno sociale che i giornali devono assumersi quando divulgano informazioni?
- Come la religione dovrebbe cambiare per rimanere al passo con i cambiamenti della società e per essere ancora interessante per i giovani?
- Abbiamo ancora bisogno di spiritualità?
- Il carcere ha una funzione punitiva o riabilitativa?
- Cosa possiamo fare per fermare la fuga dei cervelli dal nostro paese?

Teacher Examiners

Candidates' success in Unit 3 is reliant on a 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. Whilst thanking many examiners who conducted the exam successfully, below is listed some areas for improvement which look improve the skills of the teacher examiners.

Some examples of good questions:

1) Secondo te c'è parità tra uomo e donna sul lavoro? In quale settore vorresti vedere più donne. Perché secondo te mancano? Quale lavoro è più adatto alle donne? Mancando il lavoro, quale settore va sfruttato?

2) Cosa ne pensi della pena di morte? Come giudichi il lavoro di Amnesty International? È giusto usare mine anti-uomo in guerra?

3) Secondo te la scuola ha un ruolo sociale? Secondo te questo ruolo va a scapito dell'istruzione? Secondo te un insegnante deve essere anche un modello sociale? Come immagini la scuola del futuro?

The following is another example of some good questions:

Issue:

Il sistema educativo inglese è migliore di quello italiano

Counter-arguments:

Io credo che la riforma Gelmini abbia avviato una modernizzazione della scuola italiana, non sei d'accordo?

Non credi che l'interrogazione prepari ai rapporti umani e sviluppi la dialettica?

Secondo me il numero chiuso limita la libertà ed il diritto allo studio.

Penso che il fatto di cambiare in continuazione il programma di esami in Inghilterra crei confusione tra studenti ed insegnanti.

Some examples of poor questions:

- *parlami della pena di morte*
- *parlami dell'aborto.*

Centres must note that if they employ Italian native speakers (and not teachers) to conduct the exam, should make sure that all the important information on the conduct of the tests are understood, to avoid later disappointments.

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. The all too frequent "*Cosa ne pensi?- Perché sei interessato?- Dimmi cosa hai studiato?- Dove hai fatto le ricerche? – 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.

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 trained 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
- too many factual questions not designed to elicit opinions
- questions at GSCE level asked
- only one topic discussed after initial issue
- difficulties to establish the two unpredictable areas as questions were all within the issue chosen by the candidate
- candidates not allowed to demonstrate language and debating skills.

Administration

Some issues arising from the administration of the test can be recapped 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 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 would be well advised to package 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

This summer exams were very well conducted in several centres. Many candidates performed well in this examination and appear to have taken the trouble to prepare themselves proficiently.

There is also the facility to contact any of the Principal Examiners through the Ask the Expert service. An online Oral Training Guide is also accessible.

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