Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Italian (9IN0)

Paper 3A Speaking

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Introduction

2022 marked a return to the A-level Italian oral set under the revised specification. Many candidates showed they had a level of language proficiency of a good standard, and the general understanding of themes and sub-themes was of a commendable level. Where there was a choice, candidates opted for sub-themes associated with cards 1.2.3.5.8.

As this is the first Principal Examiner's report for the new specification after Covid 19, it is perhaps important to review and clarify different aspects of this 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 **2-minute** 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 that follows must explore more widely the student's presentation and 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. The teacher-examiner **must ask** the compulsory questions **in the order** they are presented, **without asking extra** questions between them
- there is a need for candidates to elicit 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 previous Legacy syllabus 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).

AO1 – 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.

AO3 – 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**.

AO4 – Knowledge and Understanding of Italian-speaking society and culture – Task 1 and 2

This grid assesses students' ability to communicate information and demonstrate appreciation for 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 and supporting their ideas with examples.

Knowledge and Understanding of Italian-speaking society and culture is awarded **12 marks**.

AO2 - 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

Candidates who opted for the topic of family, were able to discuss about different kinds of family, they were familiar with the concepts of '*mammoni*' and were aware of the issues young people face with unemployment. They were able to discuss the cultural aspects of Italian family life including festivities.

Candidates also had great understanding of the issues surrounding immigration in Italy. This is a topic that all candidates felt close to their personal experience since many have lived for periods of time in Italy as immigrants. They understood how 'language' is a great issue which hinders immigrants' integration. Many commented on how there is a risk that TE immigrants are perceived as taking away local employment. However, students also recognised that immigrants were those who did manual jobs that local people did not want to carry out. Many successfully evaluated the differences between North and South and the issues related to both parts of Italy, including its stereotypes.

Candidates also had a good understanding of the issues surrounding social media, in particular its dangers, but they didn't support their views with data or quotations from relevant sources, giving mostly a personal albeit correct view of the topic.

Questions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7. These questions were better answered in the sense that they offered greater scope for conversation on topics which, in any case, fall within the experience of a student aged eighteen.

Questions 4 and 6. These questions were less well answered in so far as they required specific and more in-depth - study of cultural aspects of Italian society - music, customs and traditions. This led in part to all too frequent comparison with British music and traditions. This tendency occurred both with examiner questions and the candidate responses.

Where there was a choice, relatively few candidates opted for stimulus cards 10 to 12 associated with fascism, but those who did so, demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the required period of history and were able to argue effectively and in detail. Much effort had obviously gone into their preparation.

However, some teachers were not aware of the need to shift to a different subtopic of the same Theme in Task1-Part2.

The following is an example of a good performance. (Task1 – Stimulus IN3 B). TE is not native Italian. Candidate is not native Italian. TE and candidate seem to have a natural conversation, which flows moving gradually and naturally from work to families and education. Language is mostly accurate and rarely errors hinder clarity.

Question 1

TE: **Secondo te, quali sono i problemi che le donne incontrano nel mondo del lavoro?**

C: *Credo che le donne in Italia devono affrontare molti problemi per quanto riguarda la disparità tra i generi. Per esempio il soffitto di cristallo che ferma le donne di avanzare a livello degli uomini nel mondo del lavoro ed anche le quote rose che limitano fino a un certo punto i posti di lavoro in una certa impresa. Però per me, penso che questa sia un po' della discriminazione positiva verso alle donne. E per di più credo che molte imprese discriminano verso le donne per esempio con figli o donne incinta perché si sa che alcune imprese in Italia discriminano contro le donne incinta perché gli fanno di prendere un test di gravidanza. È ingiusto, no?*

TE: È scioccante!

Question 2

TE: Credi che esistano ancora degli ostacoli che impediscono alle donne di fare carriera?

C: *Direi si, perché durante il ventennio fascista per esempio le donne erano casalinghe e l'angelo di casa. E per questo per le donne è più difficile oggigiorno di conciliare la vita lavorativa e la vita familiare. Perché all'epoca l'uomo era il capofamiglia e la donna curava ai figli. Cosa ne pensi di questo?*

TE: Allora tu stai dicendo che quel passato ha ancora degli impatti sulle mentalità della famiglia? Riguardo il mondo del lavoro, abbiamo parlato delle donne e ci sono molte opportunità per i giovani in questo ambito?

C: *Credo che no, il tasso della disoccupazione giovanile in Italia è molto alto. Si sa che il fenomeno dei neets in Italia è un problema molto grave. In Italia quest'anno ci sono 2 milioni dei neet ed è molto difficile per i giovani di trovare opportunità lavorativa in Italia e per questo molti giovani neolaureati si trasferiscono all'estero per trovare più stabilità per quanto riguarda alle opportunità lavorative. E per questi si chiama fuga dei cervelli. Cosa ne pensi di questo?*

TE: Si, è un problema, ma ci sono dei flussi migratori tra i giovani all'interno in Italia?

C: *Dal Mezzogiorno molti giovani si trasferiscono al nord d'Italia per trovare lavoro. A livello stereotipo il nord è più laborioso ed industriale e per questo ci sono più imprese al nord che vogliono più dipendenti.*

TE: Abbiamo menzionato il contrasto del ruolo della donna durante il fascismo: com'è cambiata la famiglia italiana?

C: *Penso che oggigiorno ci sono più tipi della famiglia come le famiglie monogenitoriali, però ovviamente c'è ancora discriminazione perché il matrimonio omosessuale non è ancora legale in Italia ed anche adottare in Italia non è possibile e per me benché i tipi delle famiglie in Italia oggigiorno siano più moderne può darsi si dovrebbe fare di più.*

TE: Pensi che la religione sia la causa di questo?

C: *Penso che si perché Italia è un paese molto cattolico e soprattutto la generazione più vecchia crede che i valori morali per quanto riguarda la chiesa cattolica hanno molto valore e per questo credo che c'è molta discriminazione verso le famiglie omosessuali.*

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 jeans alibi/Denim Day*", "*The effect of Covid-19 on the Italian education system*", "*How to promote Italian cultural heritage amongst the younger generation*" and "*The importance of regional dialects*". Topics such as 'La Mafia or La Camorra' as well as the work and lives of the Judges Falcone and Borsellino were popular among students. Others chose to discuss famous artists, scientists, and writers with their remarkable work. There was also a section of students who chose to research the world of sport, with most discussing the scandal of 'calciopoli', and the world of Fashion (Versace and Gucci).

Many of the candidates assessed did not mention their sources during their presentation and some only referred to them 'in passing' ("In an article I read…"); this made it difficult to establish what sources the candidates had based their research on, especially when the RP3 form was not uploaded on the Learner Work Assessment platform.

Task 2-Part 1: Candidates in the opening statement of their presentation should:

- indicate topic and names of the two written sources to be summarised in the presentation
- give a summary of the first written source
- give a summary of the second written source
- provide a personal reaction to the findings of the two written sources.

Task 2- Part 2: Teachers should warn candidates against choosing topics that do not allow them to critically analyse aspects of the Italian culture and society. Teachers-examiners should make sure that the follow up questions they ask are relevant to the candidate's research project or other related issues avoiding 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.
A fair number of candidates and teachers-examiners allowed their discussion to be exceptionally general with no particular focus. In too many cases it was evident that teachers-examiners had not read the RP3 form or were not aware of the candidate's research project in advance of the exam (this was particularly evident for visiting examiners). This resulted in awkward pauses and in 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 next 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. The number of native English speakers was particularly low this year, but most candidates demonstrated good or excellent skills. Despite language errors, most students were comfortably within the band 7-9.
Some weak points observed were:
- the use of prepositions
- reported speech
- use of the subjunctive mood
- English interferences: "venire insieme" (riunirsi); "fare tempo" (trovare)
- false friends: "educato" (istruito)
- formal/informal: "Sei d'accordo con me, Signora?"
- Impersonal: " ...tu puoi trovare lavoro." (si può)

Some candidates seemed unaware that constructions such as "*he wanted them to …*" or "*he wanted her to do*" cannot be translated literally into Italian but require the subjunctive. Many candidates, even among competent speakers, linked adjective to infinitive with the word *di*, thus incorrectly creating expressions such as "*è importante di ricordare*". Some candidates chose "*chi*" at the head of a relative clause instead of "*che*", possibly through the influence of French. There were several basic errors, due, in part, to the pressure of fluency. Not all native English-speaking 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 use of the possessive adjective proved a problem for some students who did not know that the article is not used with the possessive adjective when used with an unqualified singular close relative of the type "*mia sorella*" or "*suo fratello*" but is indeed used with *"loro"* in expressions such as "*il loro padre*".

Some candidates were unaware that nouns used in a general statement and covering a general concept require the definite article "*unemployment = la disoccupazione*".

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 the two years gap due to Covid 19.

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 the Independent Research Form (RP3) to help them formulate their own questions.
- When conducting the examination teachers-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 items should be upload to **LWT**:
- MP3 recording.
- A Level Italian RP3 form – to provide information for Task 2.
- CS4 – candidate speaking authentication sheet – declaration and authorisation form signed.

Recording

- Place the microphone closer to the candidate and not the teacher.
- Conduct the exam in a quiet room.
- Use the best quality recording equipment that is available.
- Record the candidate exam as an MP3.

Final comments

Congratulations to teachers and candidates!

This summer exams were very well conducted in several centres.
There is little doubt that the new specification of A-level Italian is a challenging examination. Nonetheless, the general level of this examination is high, and many candidates seem to have embraced the demands of this oral exam with a 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: Unfortunately, there were centres in which the teacher-examiner was not aware of how to conduct the exam and did not understand the timing for each part of the exam. These cases unfortunately impacted on the grades of their students.
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.